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Philosophy of the Gods.

(*Deva Tattwa*)

BY

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FOREWORD.

In the following pages, I have attempted to give a brief exposition of *Devatattwa* or the philosophy of the gods. They are expanded from the notes of a course of lectures which I delivered sometime ago to a class of Hindu students in Calcutta.

The subject is a vast and complicated one and I feel rather oppressed by a sense of the meagre and inadequate nature of my treatment of it.

At the outset, I must place on record my supreme obligation to Mrs. Annie Besant : but for her illuminative lecture on the functions of the gods this little book would never have been written.

May *Maheshwara*, the God of the gods, bless this humble undertaking.

3rd December,
1906.

Harendra Nath Datta.

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The Philosophy of the Gods.

INTRODUCTION.

The Philosophy of the gods (called 'Devas' in the Hindu books, as distinguished from '*Isvara*') is one of the corner-stones of Hinduism and has, therefore, to be mastered by every one desirous of gaining an insight into the Hindu religion. It is a subject which is widely misunderstood and mis-represented and has been so, ever since the East came into close relations with the West on the foundation of the English dominion in India.

The crude monotheism of the early Protestant missionaries saw in it nothing but a debased polytheism, in their judgment, at once Some Misconceptions. superstitious and insulting to the One true God. After them, came Raja Ram Mohan Roy, who, while accepting the authority of the Vedas and the Vedanta, regarded the Vedic Gods as "allegorical representations of the attributes of the Supreme Being". According to him, "the Veda having, in the first instance, personified all the powers and attributes of the Deity and also the celestial bodies and natural elements, does, in conformity with this idea of personification, treat of them in the subsequent passages, as if they were real beings,

ascribing to them birth, animation, senses and accidents as well as liability to annihilation." To the objection that the Devas, though the attributes of God, might yet exist as distinct entities, as separate created existences, the Raja's reply was categorical : "In case these attributes should be supposed to be separate existences, it must necessarily follow that they must be either eternal ^{Ram Mohan} or non-eternal. The former case strikes ^{Roy.} immediately at the root of all the doctrines relative to the unity of the Supreme Being contained in the Vedanta. By the latter sentiment we are at once led into the belief that the nature of God is susceptible of change and consequently that he is not eternal, which makes no inconsiderable step towards atheism itself". Judged by this logic, the separate existence of all created life including man, must either make towards atheism or transgress the law of Vedic unity. The truth, however, which Raja Ram Mohan Roy seems to have missed by mistaking the phenomenal separateness of the gods for absolute separateness, is that so far as the inner essence, the true self—the *Pratyagatma* of the Devas—is concerned, the Devas are the *Bibhutis* of Isvara. Viewed from this stand-point, everything in the universe, including man, is the *Bibhuti* of the Lord, Who is verily, One without a second. But to say that the Devas are only the attributes of God, is as we shall see, only a half-truth.

After Raja Ram Mohan Roy, came Swami Dayananda, the founder of the 'Arya Samaj'. He was a firm believer in the Vedas, but seems somehow to have

mis-understood the philosophy of the gods therein contained. Being a rigid monotheist, he could not tolerate a plurality of gods, and when faced with the Vedic Devas,—Indra, Varuna, Agni, Soma, &c, he juggled out of the difficulty by interpreting all these names to mean *Isvara* in His various aspects. To accomplish this feat he had recourse to a forced and far-fetched system of etymology—all his own. *Ekam Sad Bipra Bahudha Bodanti*—एकं सद्विप्रा बहुधावदन्ति—There is but One Existence, sages call it variously. The Vedic gods, therefore, thought this great man, were merely so many forms of speech, to indicate the One Reality. Thus, the Devas according to Swami Dayananda, have no separate existence, but are simply names to connote *Isvara*. To support this view, the Swami had to deny the authority of a large portion of the Hindu Scriptures, namely, the *Smritis* and the *Puranas*. But it may be easily proved by references to the Vedas and the Upanishads, on which the Swami took his stand, that not only are the Devas distinct *created* entities, but that they are “*Bigrahabanta*” (विग्रहबन्तः) i.e. possessed of forms. It is only necessary to refer in this connection to the second part of the *Kena Upanishad*, where it is related that Brahman (*Isvara*) having given victory to the Devas, they became inflated with false pride. Therefore, to humble them, Brahman appeared before them as a strange being and laid before them a blade of grass, which, the mightiest of the gods,—Agni, Vayu and Indra—could not move. Thereafter, Uma, the embodiment of the Divine Wisdom, appeared before

them and conveyed to them the much-needed lesson that none else, in this universe, but Isvara, was the source of all power. Again the *Kaushitaki Upanishad*, in the famous discourse between Balaka and Ajatasatru, expressly draws a distinction between Isvara and the Devas, regarding the latter as separate created entities. "He verily should be known, Who is, O Balaka, the creator of these beings (Devas), Whose verily they be the creation."* The same distinction is also insisted upon in the following passages of the *Brihad Aranya Upanishad*: "Verily in the beginning this was the Brahman. It created the gods and having created the gods, it made them ascend these worlds ; Agni this world ; Vayu the air ; and Surya the sky ; and the deities who are above these he made ascend the worlds which are above these".† "Prajapati created living beings. From the out-breathings he created the gods and from the downward-breathings, the mortal beings". ‡

Likewise, the Vedic hymns contain numerous passages in which the *Murtis* (physical features and characteristics) of the Devas are referred to. This is well brought out in the following passage, which I take the liberty of transcribing from Macdonald's 'Vedic Mythology'.—"The physical appearance of the gods is anthropomorphic, though only in a shadowy manner. * * Thus, head, mouth, cheeks, eyes, hair, shoulders, breast, belly, arms, hands, fingers, feet, are attributed to

* ये वै वत्ताक एतेषां पुरुषाणां कर्त्ता—यस्य वै तत् कर्म स वै वेदितव्यः ।

† IX-2-3-2. ‡ X-1-3-1.

various individual gods. Head, breast, arms and hands are chiefly mentioned in connection with the warlike equipment of Indra and the Maruts. ** Two or three gods are spoken of as having assumed all forms, (p 17). ** They (the gods) are said to have obtained immortality by drinking *Soma* which is called the principle of immortality (*Shatapatha Brahmana*, 9. 5. 1. 8). The gods are said to have attained divine rank by *tapas* (*Taittiriya Brahmana*, 3. 12. 3) and to have overcome death by continence and austerity (*Atharvaveda*, 11. 5. 19).* In the face of such explicit declarations as these, one need not feel much hesitation in rejecting the assumptions of Swami Dayananda.

We have next to notice the theory of the orientalists headed by Professor Max Muller, in whose view, "mythology is the disease of language" and the Vedas, "the babblings of a child humanity". According to these savants, the Vedic Aryan personified the powers of Nature manifesting in physical and atmospheric phenomena. "He gives names to all the powers of Nature, and after he has called the fire—Agni, the sun-light—Indra, the storms—Maruts, the dawn—Ushas, they all seemed to grow naturally into beings like himself. He invokes them, he praises them, he worships them." Not satisfied with the current name of Polytheism, Professor Max Muller coined a new term "Kathenotheism" or "Henothēism" to connote his

* Macdonald's *Vedic Mythology*, page 17.

view of the Vedic theogony. "Deities are invoked by different names, some clear and intelligible, such as Agni—fire, Suryya—the sun; others, such as Varuna, Mitra, Indra, which have become proper names. But whenever one of these individual gods is invoked, they are not conceived as limited by the powers of others, as superior or inferior in rank: each god is to the mind of the suppliant as good as all the gods. This surely is not what is commonly understood by polytheism; yet it will be equally wrong to call it monotheism. If we must have a name for it, I should call it kathenotheism."

This theory is still in possession of the field. Mr. R. C. R. C. Dutt, the Historian of Ancient India, has accepted it without reserve. "The religion of the Rig-Veda is well known. It is pre-eminently the worship of Nature in its most imposing and sublime aspects. The sky which bends over all, the beautiful and blushing dawn which like a busy house-wife wakes men from slumber and sends them to their work, the gorgeous tropical sun which vivifies the earth, the air which pervades the world, the fire which cheers and enlightens us, and the violent storms which in India usher in those copious rains which fill the land with plenty—these were the Gods whom the early Hindus loved to extol and to worship. ** Such is the nature-worship of the Rig-Veda; such were the gods and goddesses whom our forefathers worshipped four thousand years ago on the banks of the Indus. The conception of the nature-Gods and the single-hearted fervency with which they were adored, argue the simplicity and vigour of a manly race, as well

as the culture and thoughtfulness of a people who had already made a considerable progress in civilisation."*

The late Babu Bankim Chundra Chatterji, in his studies of the Veda, also endorsed this theory, with but slight modifications. Yet no theory, which is not founded on the solid basis of truth, can stand, and this theory of the learned Professor, not being, as we shall show, based on truth, is bound to go the way of its predecessors.

§ 1. THE DEVAS: WHAT THEY ARE.

What, then, are the Devas,—the gods of the Hindu Scriptures? *The Devas are not the same as Isvara*, as is generally supposed by those who characterise Hinduism as being polytheistic. Neither are they empty abstractions or personifications or mere figures of speech; nor are they simply attributes of the Supreme Deity. They are separate created entities, just like other created, *i. e.* phenomenal existences; they are, in fact, the Intelligences belonging to the *Svar Loka* or the Spiritual Plane of the Cosmos.

We know that Nature never works *per saltum*; there is no breach of continuity in her domain. Thus, there is a linked chain, connecting the mineral, the vegetable and the animal kingdom. As ^{The Devas,—} _{an intellectual and spiritual necessity.} science is daily finding out, there are no sudden gaps in the continuity of the ever-evolving Life. There are no rigid or sharp lines of demarcation between the great groups. It is, as it were, a continuous line,—a

* *Civilisation in Ancient India*, chap. vi, pp. 75 and 92.

spectrum with various colours each gradually merging into the one following,—a graduated, inter-blending and inter-connected scale of manifesting Life. Thus, between the mineral and the vegetable, science is discovering connecting links—forms of life pertaking of the nature of both. So also between the vegetable and the animal kingdom. We all know and feel that the distance between man and God is almost immeasurable. Is there really nothing to bridge this infinite gulf? How could there be such an immense and insuperable gap between man and the Highest Life? Why should there be an utter void of Being between the highest life of the Supreme Isvara and that of the puny, grovelling man? Is man, weak and imperfect as he is, the goal of evolution? This is un-thinkable. The absence, moreover, of the Deva-idea from any form of religious thought has the inevitable effect of making the God-conception there-in anthropomorphic and degraded. In the result, God becomes more a man than a God, clothed, as He in such a case must necessarily be, with human ideas and human limitations. We all know that the un-scientific conception of a God out of relation with the universe, yet sharing with man some of the lowest of human failings, has injured religion more than any amount of scientific criticism. In this connection, I cannot do better than place before the reader the weighty words of Mrs. Annie Besant when dealing with this problem.

"First let us take up the problem of problems, that of the existence of God and the conceptions of divinity formulated by man. There is one fundamental principle

that must be recognised in approaching this problem—the unity of existence. If God and man be regarded as basically different,—a mighty un-spanned gulf stretching between them,—then the problem of the divine existence and of man's relation thereto seems to frown upon us as defying solution. But if God and man be seen as one essence, humanity as an off-shoot of the one Tree of Life, and as one of myriad offshoots, sub-human and super-human—one radiant arch of beings, each instinct with divine life—then the question, as it affects man, appears by no means a hopeless one. The West, bending to the former conception—that of a fundamental difference of nature between the creator and the created—has swung between the un-acceptable extremes of crude anthropomorphic monotheism and philosophic agnosticism. The East, founding its religion on the second conception, that of unity, ^{Annie Besant.} has contentedly accepted a religious pantheism as intellectually necessary and as emotionally satisfying. Pantheism in the West has hitherto been an exotic and has appealed strongly only to the highly intellectual; its God has remained a cold abstraction, intellectually sublime but emotionally chill. In the East the One Existence, meeting all intellectual difficulties by the affirmation of the universality of that Existence—God is everything and every thing is God—yet passed naturally into the recognition of endless gradations of beings expressing very various measures of the Divine Life, some so lofty in their nature, so vast in their power, so far reaching in the range of their consciousness, that

they include every element that the christian Monotheist has found necessary for the satisfaction alike of the intellect and of the heart. The Eastern Pantheism recognises that the Divine Life manifests itself in modes of existence which bridge over the gulf between man and God manifesting as God. It acknowledges mighty Intelligences who rule the invisible and visible worlds, and presiding Gods who guide the order of Nature and watch over the destinies of men, the Agents of the Supreme Will in every department of life, the fitting objects of reverence and worship. Just in proportion as the existence of these Great Beings is recognised and enters practically into human life—whatever may be the name given to them—is religion strong against the attacks of agnosticism and unbelief. For these ranks of spiritual Beings, rising in ascending hierarchies till they culminate in the Supreme God of the system to which they belong, give to men intelligible ideals of Divinity, which rise as they rise, expand with the expansion of their consciousness and meet at every stage of evolution the craving of the human heart for some superior being far above itself, whom it can love, trust, reverence, worship, appeal to for aid when human help is far. As men rise on the ladder of evolution, their ideal of God enlarges, deepens, expands; at each point of their growth their ideal shines alluringly above them, narrow enough at the lowest point to meet the needs of the most limited intelligence, vast enough at a higher to task the intellect of the profoundest thinker." *

* Some Problems of Life,—pp. 74-75.

§ 2. UNIVERSALITY OF THE BELIEF IN THE DEVAS.

If we look around us, at the great revealed religions of the world we find that every one of them admits the existence of intermediate created beings between man and God, beings or intelligences that supply the missing links in the divine order of evolution. The Greek and Roman races had their gods, Zeus, Jupiter &c. The Goths had their Thor and Odin. The old Persian Religion acknowledged its Feristha, Amasapanth and Ahurs. The Hindus have their Devas or Suras, Prajapatis, Adityas &c. The Buddhists have their Dhyan Chohans and the like ; and Christianity also speaks of the hierarchies of Angels and Archangels.

It will be too much to say that this universal belief in these intermediate Beings is due to a common ignorance. On the contrary, the very universality of the idea is a proof of its truth. The Devas, therefore, ought not to be summarily or lightly dismissed ; for they occupy a very important place in creation and perform, as we shall see, some very important functions.

§ 3. THE DEVAS—THEIR HABITAT.

The ancient seers of India divided the universe into seven planes and confining their attention to our solar system or the cosmos with which we are directly concerned, they spoke of its seven regions or *Lokas*, naming them *Bhur*, *Bhubar*, *Svar*, *Janar*, *Mahar*, *Tapas*, and *Satya*, which terms have been translated as the Physical, Astral, Mental, Spiritual, Nirvanic, Parinirvanic and

Maha-parinirvanic planes. Every one of these planes is material in its constitution ; that is, formed by the aggregation of *Prakriti* or matter. The matter of the astral plane is finer than that of the physical ; and as we go up higher and higher from plane to plane, the matter becomes finer and less dense until we reach the *Satya Loka*, where the matter is of the finest and rarest, in composition. Now each of these seven planes is subdivided into seven sub-planes ; so that we have altogether forty-nine sub-planes. For instance, in the physical plane, we have matter in the seven states of solid (*Kshiti*), liquid (*Apas*), gaseous (*Tejas*), etheric (*Vayu*), finer etheric (*Akasha*), finest etheric (*Anupadaka*), and atomic (*Adi*). Thus solids (e. g. ice) may be raised first to the liquid condition and then changed into vapour which is the gaseous state. Orthodox science does not admit the possibility of raising gases into the etheric state. But we are taught that gases may also be broken up and raised through the etheric conditions to the atomic state. A physical atom is physical matter in its rarest condition and if broken up, it will yield not physical but astral matter. Similarly with the astral and the other five planes ; each has its several sub-planes of solid, liquid, gas, ether, finer ether, finest ether and atom.

Now, we all know that the physical plane or *Bhur Loka* is tenanted by various classes and grades of living beings (*Jivas*). Putting aside the vegetable kingdom, we have the animal and human kingdoms with their various divisions and sub-divisions—*insects, reptiles, fishes, birds, mammals, etc.* Not to speak of the indi-

viduals, the genera and species are almost innumerable. At the same time we find that some species take more kindly to one sub-division of the physical plane than to others. Thus, a fish is in its element in water, a bird in air and a horse on firm land. Is it resonable to suppose that all the regions of the cosmos other than the physical are un-tenanted, are empty of living beings ? Let us hear what Bulwer Lytton, himself an occultist, has to say in the matter.

"Man is arrogant in proportion to his ignorance. Man's natural tendency is to egotism. Man in his infancy of knowledge, thinks that all creation was formed for him. For several ages he saw in the countless worlds, that sparkle through space like the bubbles of a shoreless ocean, only the petty candles, the household torches, that Providence had been pleased to light for no other purpose but to make the night more agreeable to man. Astronomy has corrected this delusion of human vanity ; and man now reluctantly confesses that the stars are worlds, larger and more glorious than his own—that the earth on which he crawls is a scarce visible speck on the vast chart of creation. But in the small as in the vast, God is equally profuse of life. The traveller looks upon the tree ; and fancies its boughs were formed for his shelter in the summer sun or his fuel in the winter frosts. But in each leaf of these boughs the Creator has made a world ; it swarms with innumerable races. Each drop of water in your moat is an orb more populous than a kingdom is of men. Everywhere, then,

in His immense design, Science brings new life to light. Life is the one pervading principle, and even the thing that seems to die and putrify, but engenders new life, and changes to fresh forms of matter. Reasoning, then, by evident analogy,—if not a leaf, if not a drop of water, but is, no less than yonder star, a habitable and breathing world—nay, if even man himself is a world to other lives, and millions and myriads dwell in the rivers of his blood, and inhabit man's frame as man inhabits earth, common sense (if your schoolmen had it) would suffice to teach that the circumfluent infinite which you call space—the boundless impalpable which divides earth from the moon and stars—is filled also with its correspondent and appropriate life. Is it not a visible absurdity to suppose that Being is crowded upon every leaf, and yet absent from the immensities of space? The law of the great system forbids the waste even of an atom; it knows no spot where something of life does not breathe. In the very charnel-house is the nursery of production and animation. Is that true? Well, then, can you conceive that space, which is the Infinite itself, is alone a waste, is alone lifeless, is less useful to the one design of universal being than the dead carcass of a dog, than the peopled leaf, than the swarming globule? The microscope shews you the creatures on the leaf; no mechanical tube is yet invented to discover the nobler and more gifted things that hover in the illimitable air. Yet between these last and man is a mysterious and terrible affinity. And hence, by tales and legends, not wholly false nor wholly true, have arisen from time to

time, beliefs in apparitions and spectres. If more common to the earlier and simpler tribes than to the man of your duller age, it is but that, with the first, the senses are more keen and quick. And as the savage can see or scent, miles away, the traces of a foe invisible to the gross sense of the civilised animal, so the barrier itself between him and the creatures of the airy world is less thickened and obscured.”*

So Huxley in his ‘*Essays upon Some Controverted Questions*’ (page 36) says—“Without stepping beyond the analogy of that which is known, it is easy to people the cosmos with entities in ascending scale until we reach something practically indistinguishable from omnipotence, omnipresence and omniscience.”

And in ‘*Death and After*’ (page 29) we read,—“Strange indeed would it be if all the space around us is empty, mere waste void, and the inhabitants of earth the only forms in which intelligence could clothe itself.”

This would be an extremely unreasonable supposition. Our sacred books teach us that every region of the universe is inhabited by *Jivas* possessed of appropriate vehicles—bodies composed of the matter of that particular plane, which enables the *Jiva* to function therein, in the same way as we are able to function in the physical world through our physical vehicle. The astral world or *Bhubar Loka* is the habitat of Nature-spirits, and ele-

* *Zanoni*,—Book IV. Chap. IV. pp. 225-6.

mentals. * The Heaven world or *Svar Loka* is inhabited by the lower *Devas* or angels. The *Janar Loka* and the other higher regions are tenanted by the higher *Devas*, the Archangels, the Dhyanchohans of the Buddhists. So, then, no region of the cosmos is empty of living beings.

§ 4. THE DEVAS,—THEIR GRADES AND CLASSES.

* Coming next to consider the grades and classes of these beings, we have, first of all, the broad division of the Hindu Scritpures into *Devas* (देवाः) and *Devayonis* (देवयोनि॑). The *Devayonis* are sub-divided into eight classes —the *Yakshas*, the *Rakshasas*, the *Gandharvas*, the *Kinnaras*, the *Apsaras*, the *Pishachas*, the *Guhyakas* and the *Vidyadharas*. These correspond to the Salamanders, Fairies, Gnomes, Nymphs, Satyrs, Nereids, etc., of mediæval Europe and of classical mytholgy and the Peris and Jins of the Mahomedan books. The Buddhist calls these beings *KamaDevas*. The *Rupa Devas* of the Buddhist are the lower gods—the *Devatas*, inhabiting the *Swar Loka*; and the higher Gods—the Devas of the Vedic mythology, for instance, correspond to the *Arupa Devas* of the Buddhists. The *Janar* and higher *Lokas* are peopled by the *Adityas*, the *Vasus* and the *Rudras*, the *Prajapatis* and the *Siddhas*, concerned with the creation, preservation and dissolution of the cosmos. Higher still come

* यज्ञोगम्बव्याप्सरोगणसीवितम् अत्तरीक्षम् । सायनधृत तापनीयशाखावच्चनम् ॥

आदित्याच्छ्रभवीविश्वे साभ्याश पितरस्तथा ।

क्षषयोऽन्निरसयैव भुवर्लोकसमाप्तिता : वायुपुराण—उ-ख-३—२०

the Regents (*Lokapalas*), the *Lipikas* (Recorders of karma), the *Maharajas* and the *Dhyana Chohans*.*

As above so below ; as below so above. We have seen that the species and genera of the living creatures inhabiting the physical world are, so to say, innumerable. We may take it that such is also the case with the various grades and classes of Jivas whose habitat is the astral and other higher planes. In this view, the enumeration of these beings at 33 crores would seem to fall rather short of the mark.

In saying this, I do not lose sight of the passage in the *Brihad Aranyaka* (kanda., XI—3—6) which whittles down the number of the gods to one and one half in the famous dialogue between *Yajnavalkya* and *Sakalya*.

‘How many gods are there, really, *Yajnavalkya*?’
‘Thirty three’.

‘Yea, so it is’, he said, ‘How many gods are there really?’ ‘Three.’

‘Yea, so it is’, he said, ‘How many gods are there really?’ ‘Two.’

‘Yea so it is’, he said, * *

‘Who are these 33?’ ‘8 Vasus, 11 Rudras and 12 Adityas—that makes 31, and Indra and Prajapati make up the 33’.

‘Who are these 3 Gods?’ ‘These three worlds—for therein all the gods are contained.’ ‘Who are these 2 Gods?’ ‘Food and Breath, (life)’ ‘Who is the one and a half?’ ‘He who is blowing here (Vayu), the wind’ ‘Who is the one God?’ ‘Breath.’ He (*Yajnavalkya*) said—

* See on this subject C. W. Leadbeater’s *Astral Plane*—pp 62-6.

'Thou hast gone on questioning me beyond the Deity—beyond which there must be no questioning.' (Compare this with Brihad, XIV—6—6—1.). Rightly understood, this passage means that from the one Existence, there evolved first the Saguna Brahman, the Logos. Thence came Prakriti and Purusha (spoken of as Food and Breath) which together evolved the three worlds and the 33 gods concerned therewith. This is neither an exhaustive enumeration nor meant to correct the teaching, previously given, as to the gods functioning in the three worlds. It should be borne in mind that the Vedic literature generally speaks of the three orders of gods who function on the physical, astral and mental planes respectively, as in the following passages—'Threefold are the gods' (i.e., those of the sky, the air and the earth,—Brihad., VI—5—3—1). The Gods are of three orders (i.e., either the *Vasus*, *Adityas* and *Rudras*; or those of the sky, the air and the earth headed by *Surjya*, *Vayu* and *Agni* respectively.—Brihad., XIII-1-7-2).

In this connection I take the liberty of transcribing a luminous passage from Mrs. Annie Besant's ^{Shashtra corroborated.} "A Study of Consciousness" pp. 80-1:—

" But in addition to imparting qualities to aggregations of matter, the Second Logos gives forth during this stage of His descent, evolved beings, at various stages of development, who form the normal and typical inhabitants of these three kingdoms. These beings have been brought over by the Logos from a preceding evolution, and are sent forth from the treasure-house of His life, to inhabit the plane for which their

development fits them, and to co-operate with Him, and later with man, in the working-out of His scheme of evolution. They have received various names in the various religions, but all religions recognise the fact of their existence and of their work. The Sanskrit name Devas — the Shining Ones — is the most general, and aptly describes the most marked characteristic of their appearance, a brilliant luminous radiance.* The Hebrew, Christian and Mahomedan religions call them Archangels and Angels. The Theosophist — to avoid sectarian connotations—names them, after their habitat, Elementals; and this title has the further advantage that it reminds the student of their connection with the five “Elements” of the ancient world :—Ether, Air, Fire, Water and Earth. For there are similar beings of a higher type on the Atmic and Buddhic planes as well as the fire and water elementals of the mental and desire planes and the ethereal elementals of the physical. These beings have bodies formed out of the elemental essence of the kingdom to which they belong—flashing many-hued bodies, changing form at the will of the indwelling entity. They form a vast host, ever actively at work, labouring at the elemental essence to improve its quality, taking it to form their own bodies, throwing it off and taking other portions of it, to render it more responsive; they are also constantly busied in the shaping of forms, in aiding human egos

* The translation of this descriptive term as “Gods” has led to much misapprehension of Eastern thought. The “Thirty-three crores of gods” are not Gods in the Western sense of the term, but are *Devas*—shining ones.

on the way to re-incarnation in building their new bodies, bringing materials of the needed kind and helping in its arrangements. The less advanced the ego, the greater the directive work of the devas ; with animals they do almost all the work, and practically all with vegetables and minerals. They are the active agents in the work of the Logos, carrying out all the details of 'His world-plan, and aiding the countless evolving lives to find the materials they need for their clothing. All antiquity recognised the indispensable work they do in the worlds, and China, Egypt, India, Persia, Greece, Rome, tell the same story. The belief in the higher of them is not only found in all religions, but memories of those of the desire and of the ethereal physical plane linger on in folklore, in stories of 'Nature spirits' 'Fairies,' 'Gnomes,' 'Trolls' and under many other names, memories of days when men were less deeply enwrapped in material interests and more sensitive to the influences that played upon them from the subtler worlds. This concentration on material interests, necessary for evolution, has shut out the working of the elementals from human waking consciousness ; but this does not, of course, stop their working, though often rendering it less effective on the physical plane."

We are taught that each of the seven regions of the cosmos is in the charge of a great God. Seven, therefore, is the number of these gods, who rank ^{Divine} _{hierarchy} just below the *Tri-murti*. These are the *Seven Spirits* that are before the throne of God, spoken of by the Christians and the seven *Ameshaspandes* of the

Zoroastrians. The Hindu scriptures generally speak of five:—Indra, the lord of Akasha, Vayu—the lord of air, Agni — the lord of fire, Varuna—the lord of water and Kuvera—the lord of earth. But sometimes the number seven is also spoken of. Each of these great Gods, has under him a host of subordinate gods who carry out his decrees.* As pointed out in the *Chhandogya Upa-nishad* the Divine Government of the world bears close analogy to its human government. At the head of all we have the Supreme Ruler. Under him we have Viceroys in charge of different countries ; each Viceroy has subordinate to him provincial governors, who are assisted by magistrates in charge of districts and these latter have under them subdivisional officers and so on. In the same way, we have at the top of all, *Maheshwara* or the Supreme Logos. Under Him, we have the Logos of the various solar systems who are the *Ishwaras*. Each *Ishwara* has under him the seven great gods we have been speaking about ; each of these again having under him a host of subordinate gods who carry out his decrees. Thus, there are hierarchies of Intelligences, grade after grade, class after class, rank after rank, reaching from the lowest elemental to the great planetary Logos, forming a perfectly graduated ladder from the humblest to the highest. Thus, we find that the system of spiritual government is really the archetype of the government down here.

§ 5. ARE THE DEVAS FORM-LESS ?

Are the gods form-less or endowed with forms? It is

* Annie Besant's "Evolution of life and form," p 55.

clear that they do not normally use a physical body; but we find numerous passages in the scriptures which warrant us in believing that each god uses an appropriate vehicle, composed of the matter of that plane of the universe in which he normally functions. The Vedic hymns contain many *mantras* ascribing forms to the gods. The same is also the teaching of the Vedanta; and the great Shankaracharyya in his commentary on the Brahma-Sutras explicitly speaks, for instance, of Indra having a *form*; thus; "Indranama kaschit bigraba-ban-deva".*

Again, in his commentary on the Vedanta sutra 3.1-27, he speaks of the gods, having power to manifest themselves in manifold forms at one and the same time, creating for that purpose what is called "Kaya-Byuha." It would thus seem that the devas have their favourite forms, but can change them at pleasure and assume what forms they please. We will now understand, why it is said of Indra, "Indro mayabhih pururupa iyate" (इन्द्रो मायाभिः पुरुरुप ईयते)—'the self-same Indra takes manifold forms'. This may, at first sight, seem opposed to the view of the founder of the Meemansa philosophy—Jaimini, who is credited with the opinion that the devas do not exist apart from the mantras ("Mantratmika Devata—मन्त्रात्मिका देवता"). So far as I am able to make out, this implies that when a particular mantra sacred to a particular deva is recited, the vibrations, thus set up, create

* इन्द्रनामा कश्चित् वियहवान् देवः—१—२—२९.

in the higher planes, a special form, which that god ensouls for the time being.

§ 6. WHAT IS A MANTRA ?

In this connection it may not be out of place to say a few words about mantras and their effects. A mantra has been defined as a definite sequence of sounds arranged in a certain order and chanted in a certain way. The sounds give rise to, or rather are vibrations ; and the chanting of a mantra sets up a certain series of vibrations. These vibrations, we are told, if regular and even, gradually dominate the vibrations going on in the sheaths, and reduce them to a regular rhythm and harmony. The recitation of a mantra is said also to help the worshipper in attracting to himself the attention of the object of his worship. It also helps to drive away hostile influences and bad magnetism and thus improve the surroundings of the worshipper. All this is more or less subjective ; that is to say, relates to what concerns or affects the worshipper. But a mantra has an objective aspect also ; and it is this latter aspect with which we are just now concerned. Sounds, as we know, are vibrations ; and are said to give rise to definite forms. Each sound produces a form in the invisible worlds and combinations of sounds create complicated shapes. The text books of science describe certain experiments which show that notes produced by certain instruments, trace out on a bed of sand, definite geometrical figures. It is thus demonstrated that rhythmical vibrations give rise to regular geometrical figures. The Hindu

books on music tell us that the various musical tunes. (Ragas and Raginis), have each a particular shape, which the books graphically describe. For instance, the Megha Raga is said to bear a majestic form seated on an elephant. The Basanta Raga is described as a beautiful youth decked with flowers, who may well sit as model for a picture of Cupid. All this means that the particular Raga or Ragini, when accurately sung, produces aerial and etheric vibrations which create the particular shape said to be characteristic of it. This view, which at first sight seems hopelessly chimerical, has recently received unexpected corroboration from the experiments carried on by Mrs. Watts

Hughes, the gifted author of "Voice figures". She recently delivered an illustrated lecture on the "Shapes of Sounds" before a select audience in Lord Leighton's studio, to demonstrate the beautiful scientific discoveries on which she had lighted, as the result of many years of patient labour; and the following report of her lecture published in the newspapers at the time ought to prove interesting. Mrs. Hughes kept herself sedulously in the back-ground, in briefly describing the discovery of truths which, as photographically reproduced upon the screen, filled the audience with enthusiasm. She began with an allusion to "Voice Figures" that she had shewn to Professor Tyndall, who hailed them as remarkable "facts" waiting to be systematised. Whether Mrs. Hughes was in any way responsible for those original "facts" was not made clear, but she has certainly the credit of reducing them to a sys-

tem. The Report proceeds—"Mrs. Hughes sings into a simple instrument called an "Eidophone"—which consists of a tube, a receiver and a flexible membrane,—and she finds that each note assumes a definite, beautiful and constant shape, as revealed through a sensitive and mobile medium. At the outset she placed tiny seeds upon the flexible membrane and the air vibrations set up by the note she sounded, "danced" them into a definite geometrical pattern. Afterwards she used "dust" of various forms, and that collected from the *Lycopodium* was found particularly suitable. A "colour paste" also proved sufficiently sensitive and modifications of vibratory actions were introduced by the use of a screen and in other ways.

"And now it only remains to describe the shapes of the notes. Those shapes are such remarkable revelations of geometry, perspective and shading, that description is difficult. Snow flakes and pollen as seen under the microscope are not more dainty and "Japanesque" than are the shapes of notes. Stars, spirals, snakes, wonders in wheels, and imagination rioting in a wealth of captivating, methodical designs—such were what were first shown. Once when Mrs. Hughes was singing a note, a "daisy" appeared and disappeared, and "I tried," she said, "to sing it back for weeks before at last I succeeded." Now she knows the precise inflection of the particular note that is a daisy, and it is made constant and definite by a strange method of coaxing—an alternation of crescendo and divimendo. After the audience had gazed en-raptured at a series of "daisies,"

some with succeeding rows of petals and some with the petals delicately veined, they were shown other notes ; and these were "pansies," and pansies of great beauty. "How wonderful!" "How lovely!" were the audible exclamations that arose in the late Lord Leighton's studio, as exquisite form succeeded exquisite form on the screen. The flowers were followed by 'sea monsters,' as some one called them—serpentine forms of swelling rotundity, full of light and shade and detail, feeding in miles of perspective. After those notes came others, and those were trees—trees with fruit falling, trees with a foreground of rocks, trees with the sea behind. "Why", exclaimed people in the audience, "they are just like Japanese landscapes"! When the lecture was over, Mrs. Watts Hughes took up an eidophone and sang into it, and the representative of a London contemporary, watching the dust on the disc at the extremity, saw it vary from one beautiful shape to another as the lady varied her notes."

The above experiments demonstrate the following facts: (a) Sounds produce shapes, (b) particular notes give rise to particular forms, (c) if you want to reproduce a particular form, you must recite a particular note in a particular pitch, and (d) that for that purpose no other note, and no other pitch, chanting even the identical notes, will avail.

Now, apply these facts to mantras and see how they bear out the directions given in the sacred books. Let us take a concrete mantra: *Agnim ilq Purohitam*. Suppose

you transpose the words and say *Ilā Agnim Purohitam* or substitute *Bahni* for *Agni* which is the same thing (both words meaning fire), the efficacy of the mantra is gone. You cannot, therefore, transpose or translate a mantra. If you do, it will cease to be a mantra. We, therefore, find, the Rishis, (for instance, Jaimini, in his *Meemansa Darshana*,) laying special stress on this. In a mantra, the vibrations to be produced by the notes are all-important, and the meaning or absence of meaning of the words used is of no consequence. And, as a matter of fact, there are a great many mantras which are absolutely meaning-less. To this class belong the Tantric Beeja Mantras and the un-etymological vocables which occur in the mantra portion of the Atharva Veda. From this point of view, the supposed puerilities discovered by orientalists in the Vedas, which have induced them to regard these latter as the babblings of a child humanity, become a matter of indifference. To judge the Vedic hymns by their literal grammatical meanings is to approach them the wrong way. You might as well classify what are called *Kaloate* songs in Hindu music, according to their verbal interpretations. Their real merit rests on the arrangement of the tones and half tones. In the same way the efficacy of a Vedic mantra depends on the peculiarities of its pitch, and intonation as well as the measured sequence of the sounds, composing that mantra. We thus see why the ancient writers laid such emphasis on the rhythm (*Swára*) as well as the sound (*Varna*) of a mantra, for they say that when a mantra is defective either in *Swara* or *Varna*, it is incor-

rectly directed and may produce a result just contrary to what was intended.

This is why in the olden days the Vedas were taught orally and were passed from preceptor to pupil by word of mouth ; and even after the art of writing came into general use, the old practice of oral teaching was continued. Every hymn has to be uttered, strictly in the order of rhythm—in accordance with the precise rules of intonation, called *Udatta*, *Anudatta* and *Swarita* and any deviation from the prescribed mode destroys the efficacy of the mantra.

We have seen that a mantra can not be translated. Can a new mantra be composed ? Yes, if the composer possesses the requisite knowledge of the science of sounds and has developed the necessary power of sight to be able to see the effects produced by the vibrations set up by the mantra when recited. The Rishis had both, and were therefore able to compose so many potent mantras for the use of future generations.

The Sanskrit name for sound is *Varna*, which literally means colour. Why is this so ? Because in the invisible worlds all sounds are accompanied by colours, so that they give rise to many-hued shapes.* In the same

* This receives corroboration from a quite unexpected source—Mr. Benjamin Lumley's "Reminiscences of the Opera".

Mr. Lumley was the impresario of Her Majesty's Theatre in the earlier part of last century, and wrote a book of interesting recollection of his management.

In it he mentions an individual in whom sound produced a consciousness of colour. While listening to the singers at the Opera, he saw certain shades of colour which varied in purity and intensity with the quality of the voice which he was hearing.

Mr. Lumley gives a list of the colours which the voices of certain singers produced before the eyes of this person.

way, colours are accompanied by sounds. In the Sanskrit, therefore, the sun, who is the synthesis of all colours, is called Rabi which is the same word as Raba—sound. We have seen that in the experiments of Mrs. Hughes, the shapes produced by her notes were characterised by delicate shades of colouring.

We have also seen that in order to produce a particular form, a particular note must be used and that different notes give rise to different shapes.

**Story of
Narada.**

This fact is not lost sight of in the science of mantras, and you use different mantras for the purpose of invoking different gods. If you worship Mahadeva, you use a particular mantra, but in worshipping Vishnu or Sakti the mantra has to be changed. What happens when a mantra is recited? The repeated recitation of the mantra gradually builds up the form of the deva or the special manifestation of the Deity whom you seek to worship and this serves as a focus to concentrate the benign influence of the Being, which radiating from this centre, penetrates the worshipper. It is, therefore, said that the mantra of a deva is the deva and in the Brihat Gandharva Tantra (Chapter V) it is taught that the recitation of a mantra, produces the form of the god to whom it is appropriated*;

Professor Albertson, an American Scientist, recently declared: 'It is a scientific fact that a light ray, falling upon the surface of a small polished steel plate, for example, will produce a note. This is inaudible, however, unless the plate is inserted into an electric circuit, containing a microphone or a telephone ear-piece. * * *

This throws light on the practice of the ancient Egyptians who used colour-language in writing their sacred books. They attached so much importance to this matter that a writer using wrong colours in his writings used to be put to death.

शुद्धे देवि प्रवक्ष्यामि वीजानि देवरूपताम् ।
मन्त्रीश्वारणमादैष देवरूपं प्रजायते ॥

and to illustrate this truth the Tantra in question relates a story of Narada. Once upon a time, it is said, Narada, inflated with pride for his mastery of the science of sound, went to *Kailasha*, the abode of Shiva, with the object of vanquishing the God with his superior knowledge and skill. Arrived there, and bidding Shiva to be all attention to his singing, Narada, commenced his song. But the God moved not, nor did He utter a syllable in praise of the singer. At last Narada shut up through sheer exhaustion and left the place, very annoyed at what he considered Shiva's courtesy. On the way, heart-rending scenes met his sight. He found that quite a number of the denizens of that region were lying dead, maimed, mangled or distorted. On seeing him, the people exclaimed 'here goes the ruffian, who has killed our comrades'. Narada, greatly surprised at this exclamation, enquired for the reason and discovered to his utter dismay that it was his un-rhythymical singing which had produced the disaster. He quickly turned back to the abode of Shiva, contrite and weeping, and implored Parvati, Siva's consort, to undo the mischief he had caused. Thus appealed, Parvati produced a symphony of divine sound which restored the mangled corpses to life and beauty of form.

This story shews that sound not only makes but mars,—not only creates but destroys—and the experiments with the glass rod in the physical science laboratory confirm this.

It is therefore said in the Hindu books that sound is Brahman manifested. As the Christians say, the word

is God. It was by sound that the world was created it will be by sound that the world will be destroyed. Thus, sound plays an important part in the universe ; for we read that the whole universe was framed and fashioned by Brahma with the help of the Vedic mantras.

The following extract from Mrs. Besant's "Esoteric Christianity" (Chap. XII), on the effect of *Mantras*, will, I am sure be read with interest :— "Each sound has a form in the invisible world and combinations of sounds create complicated shapes. In the subtle matter of those worlds all sounds are accompanied by colours, so that they give rise to many-hued shapes, in many cases exceedingly beautiful. * * In communicating with the higher Intelligences, certain sounds are useful to create a harmonious atmosphere suitable for their activities and to make our own subtle bodies receptive of their influences. * * In order to render the bodies susceptible to the higher influences, sounds are used, which reduce the irregular vibrations to a steady rhythm, like in its nature to the rhythm of the Intelligence sought to be reached. The subtle bodies must be tuned to the note of the Being sought, if his influence is to find free way through the nature of the worshipper and this was ever done of old by the use of sounds. * *, In every religion, there exist sounds of a peculiar character called "words of power" consisting of sentences in a particular language, chanted in a particular way. Each religion possesses a stock of such sentences,—special succession of sounds, now very generally called *mantras*.

* * To translate a mantra, is to change it from a word of power into an ordinary sentence ; the sounds being changed, other sound-forms are created. * * The sounds causing active flashing forms, rise through the worlds, affecting the consciousness of the Intelligences residing in them and bringing some of them to render the definite services *required* by those who are taking part in the Church office. Such mantras form an essential part of every sacrament.

The next essential part of the sacrament in its outward and visible form, are certain gestures.

Mudras. • These are called signs or seals or sigils. (They are called Mudra in the Hindu books.) Further the word and the sign of power summon to the celebration the Angels specially concerned with the materials used and the nature of the act performed. And they lend their powerful aid, pouring their own magnetic energies into the subtle counterparts and even into the physical ether, thus re-enforcing the energies of the celebrant."

Some of the forms of the higher devas which are favourite forms with them or are normally in use, having become visible to some of the great Rishis, who had developed spiritual vision, were traditionally handed down from ancient times, and have been ^{Special forms} _{of the Devas.} preserved in stone or metal or pictured in some of our sacred temples. They are not imaginary or allegorical as is sometimes supposed or even mainly symbolical, but were actually seen by some of the great Rishis who transmitted them down the ages for the good

of humanity. But we must not suppose that these forms are in any way exhaustive, the fact being that the forms of the gods are many and various.

As we have said, under ordinary conditions the Devas are not visible to physical sight ; but they have the power of creating any vehicle that may be needed for carrying out their purpose on a lower plane, and also of materializing themselves when they wish to reveal themselves on the physical plane.

The Scriptures record numerous instances of the Devas transforming or materializing themselves with ease and rapidity, thus taking any form at will. The matter of the astral and the mental plane, that is, of the "Bhubar Loka" and the "Swar Loka" is so plastic, that it may, without difficulty, be manipulated by the Devas to clothe themselves in any special form, at their pleasure. So it is said that a Deva is not limited to a particular form.

Thus, we read in the Mahabharata that the God Dharma assumed the form of a dog, to tempt Yudhisthira when he was about to mount to the celestial regions. The story of the pigeon and the falcon, in which the pious king Sibi takes part, is also well-known. We read in the Ramayana, that when Rama Chandra visited the hermitage of the sage Sutikshna, he met there a luminous figure who was no other than Indra.

The annals of other nations contain similar records of the Devas thus manifesting themselves, and the epics of ancient Greece and Rome are full of such in-

Story of Yudh-
isthira, Sibi and
Rama Chandra.

cidents, which it would be wrong to dismiss as superstitious hallucinations.

I have heard it put forward in all seriousness, that if ^{An objection} _{answered.} the gods were really endowed with forms at their word that the recitation of appropriate *mantras* at religious ceremonies is in the nature of a peremptory summons to the gods to attend thereat,—if, that is to say, Indra were to appear at a Vedic sacrifice mounted on an elephant, the sacrificial platform ought at once to come down with a crash by his mighty weight; that if Varuna were really to appear, the place ought to be deluged with water, and that if Agni were to put in an appearance there, it ought to be immediately followed by a huge conflagration. This is really repeating the arguments of the latter-day *Meemansakas*, who, having lost sight of the true meaning of Jaimini, stoutly maintain the incorporeality of the Devas. As well might it be argued that ether cannot be, as maintained by Science, all-pervading—for if that were so, the human body ought to be perforated by the inter-penetration of the ether within it. No one has ever maintained that the Devas are endowed with physical bodies. Their vehicles are no doubt material in their constitution, but the physical states, as we have seen, do not, by any means, exhaust the sub-divisions of matter.*

Another formidable objection of the *Meemansakas*

* It is generally thought that image-worship is a later innovation in Hinduism and was linked with it after the decadence of Buddhism. This is a mis-conception. For, in the literature of the Vedic period itself we have un-equivocal evidences of image-worship :—

has been effectually disposed of by Shankaracharyya in his great commentary. The objection urged by them is to the effect that if several persons invoke Indra, for instance, at the same time, as they often do, how is it possible for the god to sub-divide himself so as to attend at all these places, also at the same time? What really happens is that wherever a Vedic hymn is properly recited, there the worshipper creates in the finer matter of the invisible world a "sound-form" which the god ensouls for the time being. As the celebration of Vedic sacrifices at several places at the same time gives rise to a multiplicity of these sound-forms, they serve as a *Kaya-byuha* which the god finds no difficulty in using at one and the same time for the purpose of manifesting himself.

It is unreasonable to object that because the Devas are not visible to us normally, therefore they must be form-less. The same line of reasoning would lead us to reject the atomic theory as a chimera and the existence of the ether as suppositional. As I have said, there are cases on record when a Deva materialized himself and was thus visible to the physical sight. In

1. Adbhuta Brahmana of the Sama Veda which speaks of the quaking of temples; and the singing, dancing, breathing, sweating, drinking and laughing of divine images.

2. The Adbhut-adhyaya of the Kaushika Sutra of the Atharva Veda makes a similar mention.

3. In Gautama Dharma Sutra temples of the gods are mentioned. Ch. XIX, s. 14;

Ch. IX, s. 66 also speaks of 'temples of the gods' ;

Images of the gods are specifically mentioned in the same Dharma Sutra, Chap. IX, s. s. 12 and 13.

4. So in Apastamba I. P. 11. k. 30 s.s. 20 and 22.

[Sacred Books of the East, Vol II, pp. 95-96].

fact, in the past they showed themselves continually among men and carried on their work, as it were, in the full blaze of day.*

But in this age of un-belief, if we wish to see the gods we must rise* by *yoga* to their plane. We must, in fact, ~~How Devas can~~ extend the range of our vision ; for what ~~be seen.~~ is vision after all but the power in us to respond to external vibrations. Why, for instance, are we unable normally to see the ultra-violet rays, or to hear the half-tones of music ? Simply because our power of response is limited within a given range. If, by any means, we could improve this power or extend its range, sights that are at present invisible to us and sounds that are now inaudible to us, would become matters of common experience. So with our vision of the gods. Sight in every plane depends upon the instrument of vision, and varies with its power and adaptability. Develop the spiritual sight and you will be face to face with the gods.

That our powers are susceptible of development, admits of no doubt. Some people are colour-blind, which means that they are unable to respond to a particular class of vibrations. We know that certain species of hunting dogs are able by means of their extraordinary sense of smell to track the foot-steps of their prey. Speaking of mental powers, the difference of intellect between an Esquimau who cannot count beyond two, and a Cambridge wrangler who revels in his Differential Calculus, is really immense ; but it is, after all, the result

* Mrs. A. Besant's "Evolution of Life and Form"—p. 53,

of development. In the same way, if we could develop our power of vision, so as to be able to respond to the minute vibrations of the higher planes which are now scattered about without evoking any response in us, the Devas would become as much visible to us, as are trees and stones on the physical plane.

Speaking of the forms of the Devas, it may not be out of place here to draw attention to the etymological meaning of the term. *Deva* literally means "the shining one." This has reference to the luminous matter of the "Swar" plane of which his vehicle is normally composed. The matter of this plane, as we know, is made up of what is called by the Hindus "radianc atoms" (Tejas Tatwa). When seen, the Deva appears like a globe of light. This explains why in painting the figures of angels, the great masters drew a halo round their forms. We may now understand why it is that the images of our gods and goddesses, are shown with an aureole of light (Chhata) around them. This is a reminiscence of actual vision of these glorious beings—these shining intelligences of the higher planes.

§ 7. THE DEVAS—WHENCE ARE THEY RECRUITED ?

I propose next to deal with the question as to whence the Devas are recruited. We are told that the highest system of evolution connected with the earth, is that of beings whom we call the Devas. "They may, in fact, be regarded as a kingdom lying next, above humanity, in the same way as humanity in turn lies next above the animal kingdom ;"** but at the same time it is a fact,

*C. W. Leadbeater's "Astral Plane," page 64.

that some of their very numerous classes have not evolved through the human stage at all. There is, thus a separate Deva evolution which is distinct from the evolution of humanity. Thus, the Upanishads speak of the *Ajana Deva* (the natural-born Deva, so to say,) as distinguished from the *Saddhya Deva*, the product of evolution from humanity. And the Scriptures have placed on record numerous instances of men having evolved into Devas. For instance, the Bhagabata Purana relates how Narada, the great *Rishi*-Initiate (Devarshi,) evolved from a rustic lad—the son of a slave girl. We also read of king Nahusha having become the king of the celestials,—Indra himself. We are also told that Bali is to become Indra in the next cycle. Further, the “Chandi” relates the life-history of an ancient king Suratha, who, by appropriate means, evolved into a Manu—Savarni Manu—of the next Manvantara; and in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad we have the explicit statement that a human being by devoting himself to a particular god, evolves into his likeness.* The Gita likewise teaches us that one devoted to the Devas, goes to the Devas. To the same effect, is the teaching in the Sankhya Sutras, which, while denying the existence of a Supreme Logos, speaks of the Vedic hymns as being addressed to liberated human beings (Muktasya Upasa—मुक्तस्य उपासा). The Vedanta Sutras are more explicit and discuss the functions of the

* Tena u etasyai devatayai sayujyam salokatam jayati (तेन उ एतस्ये देवतायै सायुज्यं सलोकतां जयति,)—Brihadaranyaka, 1-5-23.

Adhikarikas—the elects of god, the emancipated men, who, having by their special work, deserved the privilege of serving the Supreme in the government of the worlds, are appointed by the Supreme Being to discharge certain cosmic functions—(Brahma Sutras, 3-3-32). In commenting on this Sutra, Shankaracharyya speaks of the Sun-god discharging his appointed function, and of *Sanat Kumara* as being appointed to become the *Skanda* in the coming *Kalpa*. Also, the Vishnu Purana (Book II), gives a catalogue of various personages, who have been or are to be the Manu, the Indra or the Saptarshi, as the case may be, of each of the fourteen Manvantaras, that go to make up the current Kalpa. It ought to be borne in mind that these functionaries are appointed to do their appropriate duties only for a fixed period of time, so that after the expiry of that period, they either lapse into manhood, or what is oftener the case, pass on to a higher state of evolutionary growth. Thus, it is said that Suryya, the Sun-god, after doing duty as such, for a period of one thousand Deva years, will attain liberation. For, be it remembered, that the Deva-kingdom itself is within the scope of the evolutionary sweep; and as the Vedanta Sutras teach us, the *Brahma Vidya* is also for the *Devas*, and instances are not wanting of some of the gods having been initiated into the mysteries of the supreme wisdom by the great Initiates. For instance, the *Chhaṇḍyoga* Upanishad relates how Indra, the lord of the celestials, put himself under tuition to a great Rishi, who taught him the *Brahma-Vidya*.

We must not, however, lose sight of the fact, that the system of evolution obtaining among the Devas, is some-
 Deva evolu- what different from what governs mankind ;
 tion. although it is possible, as we have seen, for human beings by developing special aptitudes to become gods and to discharge their appointed functions in the government of the universe. The fact is, that when a man reaches a certain stage of evolution, there open out to him two distinct paths whereby to reach his goal. He may tread the path of *Krama-mukti* or gradual evolution and evolve into a god, donning what the Buddhists call the Dharma-kaya vesture. Thence he may gradually scale the highest steeps and become in the process of time a Prajapati or a planetary Logos, presiding over the evolution of a particular solar system*, and soon and on, until he enters into the one Existence from which all proceed. Once a man has chosen to tread this path, he loses close touch with humanity, except so far as the functions which he has to perform in the cosmic economy, may bring him into such contact. The other path is the path of direct liberation or *Videha-mukti* which evolves the sublime renunciation of what the Buddhists call the Nirmana-kaya. Thus, we see how the gods are recruited to a certain extent from among the flower of humanity—from the ranks of men forming the crest wave of evolution.

* Vide on this point Brihadaranyaka, 1-3-1, and Shankara's commentary thereon, which expressly speaks of a human aspirant evolving into a Prajapati.

§ 8. THE EXTENT OF THEIR POWER.

Next, we have to consider the extent of the power possessed by these Devas. Though they are the conscious instruments of the Supreme employed in evolving and maintaining a particular order of things, though they are the superintending and presiding Intelligences governing the workings of Nature in its various aspects, yet they cannot transcend the divinely-ordained scheme; but have always to carry out the archetypal design chalked out by the Divine Mind, accepting and working under the primeval plan projected by the Supreme Logos. And what Shankaracharyya says in his commentary on the Vedanta Sutra, 4-4-17 (Jagat Vyapara Barjjam—जगद्व्यापार वर्जन्), with reference to the emancipated souls, may, with equal appropriateness, be applied to the gods. There, Shankaracharyya lays down quite distinctly that so far as the creation or the annihilation of the root-elements of the Universe (Tatwas), that is to say the different kinds of ultimate atoms of each plane of the cosmos is concerned, it is the Supreme Logos alone that is the absolute Lord and Master. What is true of matter, is equally true of force or cosmic energy. Neither the one nor the other can be created or be destroyed by any but the Supreme Being Himself. Still, within these limits, the Devas are perfectly free, that is to say, they are masters in their own particular spheres of action and realms of activity.

§ 9. SOME OBJECTIONS CONSIDERED.

We may next consider some of the objections that

are generally brought forward by the opponents of our religion against the *Devas*. The main one is that as depicted in the sacred books they seem to be afraid of *Yogi* aspirants and put themselves athwart the upward path of their progress. The Hindu writers ^{The Devas oppose progress.} speak of their *Samadhi Bhirutwam* (समाधि भीरुत्वम्) and refer to them as *Moksha Birodhī* (मोक्ष विरोधी). The *Puranas* have put on record numerous cases where the *Devas* are seen to be putting difficulties in the way of the *Rishis* practising austerities, and trying their best to disturb their meditation. In fact, the consummation of their fall appears to be the one thing in which the gods seem to be supremely interested. Cases like those of *Vishvamitra* who fell a victim to the physical beauty of the divine *Apsara Menaka* at the instigation of the god *Indra*; of *Dhruba*, the child initiate whom the gods tried to frighten out of his *Tapas* by creating the illusion of horrors; of *Sagara*, who was prevented by the king of the celestials stealing his sacrificial horse from completing his *Ashvamedha* sacrifice, will, I am sure, arise in the reader's mind. We also hear of Jesus being tempted by Satan and of Buddha's temptation by *Mara* and his imps. And it is a common experience of the occultist that the course of true spiritual aspiration like the course of true love never runs smooth. Why is this so? Are the gods really opposed to spiritual progress? If not, what is the explanation of their conduct?

Now, the first thing to be borne in mind is that the beings who hinder human evolution or try to do so,

sometimes very unsuccessfully, are not the white but the dark powers—Satan and his compatriots, not the gods but the demons, not the Devas but the Asuras ; and we know that manifestation is founded on duality. Light and darkness, night and day, pleasure and pain, good and evil—are complementary to each other and the system of Zoroaster is broad-based on this inherent duality, so that *Ahur Masda* has always to contend with *Ahriman*. Now, the *Dharma* of these dark powers is to do evil, to retard evolution, to stop progress. Such is their inherent nature. They belong to the left-hand path—the path of selfishness and separation. Now, some of these “Lords of the dark face” wield high powers and are very potent for evil. That their chief should defy *Ishwara* himself or that *Mara* should try conclusions with the Lord Buddha or that *Hiranyakashipu* should dare to challenge Vishnu to single combat—is therefore not to be wondered at. Naturally they look upon every aspirant after the spiritual as a transgressor, every lover of God as a natural enemy ; and it would be strange, were they to sit with folded hands and listless looks, while their foes swelled in number and marched to triumph.

But, how are we to explain the conduct of the white powers—the Lords of the bright face? Why should they make it a business to thwart the aspirants? Now,

Exoteric explanation. the orthodox explanation is that the *Devas* are afraid of losing their positions and lest the aspirants should harbour dark designs in that direction, they put them down while yet undeveloped ; for ins-

tance, we read in the Vishnu Purana that when *Dhruba* was still performing austerities with a view to propitiate the Supreme Being, the gods, headed by *Indra*, approached Vishnu and supplicated him to appease *Dhruba* lest he should aspire with unholy desire to the position of *Indra*, *Yama*, *Varuna* or any other of the great gods; and Vishnu, having assured the Devas that *Dhruba*'s intentions were none other than pacific, they returned to their respective abodes in a re-assured mood. This explanation, if true, would shew the gods to be afraid of losing their high places and to be perpetually devising means for safeguarding their positions by thwarting human aspirants.

Now, if this exoteric explanation were accepted as correct, the gods would become little better than magnified evil-men,—covetous, jealous and scheming. It might be replied that they in fact are so; at least, the Puranas in many places depict them as dowered with some of the worst of human vices and failings. So far as this is concerned, I reserve my explanation until I deal with what is called the frightful immorality of the Hindu gods in the following section. At present what I want to point out is that the Puranas themselves describe the Devas as *Sattwa Pradhana*—full of the *Sattwic* quality. With beings such as these, the low vices and failings referred to above, which are, as a rule, associated with the qualities of *Rajas* and *Tamas*, ought to be impossible, being dis-harmonious and dis-cordant with their nature. We might as well attribute ferocity to a lamb. Moreover, as we have already seen in the sec-

tion dealing with the question as to whence the Devas are recruited, that the higher gods are really emancipated egos—*Mukta Purushas*. If so, how can we associate such passions and emotions,—as lust, anger, fear, jealousy &c. with them? It is no doubt true that the lower Devas—the *Deva-yonis*, as they are called in the Hindu books—are not highly evolved egos. So far as they are concerned, they may well be subject to these failings, in common with ordinary humanity. But the mischief is that the exoteric Puranas place them and the higher gods—the true Devas—so far as this matter is concerned, in the same category. These latter are recruited from the crest waves of evolution, are, in fact, liberated egos—*Jivas*, who either in this cycle or in preceding cycles having attained to liberation are now co-operating with the Logos in the government of the worlds as his vicegerents and functionaries. Darkness is not more incompatible with light than are vices with high beings such as these.

There is something more. From the very nature of things, the higher gods must be credited with a knowledge of the world-plan which they are charged to execute by the Logos of the system. Being functionaries, they must know that their respective offices are to endure during the whole of the cycle, do what human aspirants may. It is true that like other things in this manifested universe, the Devas cannot last for ever. In the graphic language of Shankaracharyya:—“ Nothing will endure for ever, not even the eight *Kulachala* mountains or the seven primeval oceans—not even Brahma, Indra, Suryya

or, Rudrā." But as pointed out in the Brahma Sutras (3. 3. 32);—"functionaries stay to discharge their duties during their appointed terms." And the Vishnu Purana (sec. iii, ch. 1 and 2) gives a list of the persons who are to discharge the functions of Indra, Manu, Sap-tarshi and Gana-devata in the future cycles as also of these functionaries in the present and by-gone cycles. This shows that the appointed term is the period covered by a whole *manvantara*. If so, Indra and the other high gods are bound to retain their places for a whole *manvantara*. In this view, their fear and trembling—lest they should be supplanted, seem to be baseless, the result of crass ignorance. The Devas being Intelligences of a superior order, this conduct on their part is not only inconceivable, but as already pointed out, inconsistent with their nature. The exoteric explanation, therefore, clearly, does not meet the circumstances of the case and we must seek for some other explanation.

The gods, we know, are the guardians of the mystic knowledge, the possession of which endows man with

The true explanation. supernatural powers. They are, in fact the custodians of *Siddhis*, and as such, the duty is cast on them to examine every aspirant thoroughly—to test him, to probe him, to put him to the strictest proof, before he is allowed to pass on to the inner shrine, before he is given the key which unlocks the mysteries of being. Just realize for one moment the immense evil that is being done in the West by the science of hypnotism and mesmerism having become common property. If we ponder on the incalculable mischief that is

likely to be wrought by occult powers being put in the hands of selfish and unscrupulous people, we can understand the zealousness with which the Devas guard the precincts of the sacred temple of divine knowledge and power. Without their watchfulness, many an unworthy aspirant would get entry into the vestibule of the shrine and not only defile the sacred temple, but what is more, prove veritable scourges to humanity by selfishly exercising the higher powers. This is mainly the reason why the Devas place obstacles in the way of the aspirants after Divinity. For, we know, that the position of the liberated ego—the *Jivanmukta*—he, who is on the threshold of *Nirvana*,—is even higher than the gods. It is, therefore, said in the Upanishads, that the knower of the self attains super-divine rank; whatever he desires comes to pass, the Devas and the Pitrīs 'lackey unto him,' all the powers—all the siddhis—wait upon him like obedient slaves.*

In the same way, we read, in the Buddhist scriptures, that when Prince Siddhartha attained to Buddha-hood, the Devas and other super-physical beings, waited upon him and worshipped him. It is therefore natural, nay needful, that the Devas should test and try the human ego, before he is allowed to become their master. This

* अथ य इह आत्मानमनुविद्य ब्रजन्ति तेषां सर्वेषु खोकेषु कामचारो भवति ।—
ज्ञान्दीग्य उपनिषद् ।

स यदि पितॄलीक कामो भवति, संकल्पादेवास्य पितॄः समुत्पत्तिन्ति ।—ज्ञान्दीग्य
उपनिषद् ।

सर्वे अच्छै देवा वलिमाहरन्ति ।—तैतिरौय उपनिषद् ।

is well put in figurative language in the "Voice of the Silence":

"Eternal life's pure waters, clear and crystal with the monsoon tempest's muddy torrents can not mingle."

"Heaven's dew-drop glittering in the morn's first sunbeam within the bosom of the lotus, when dropped on earth becomes a piece of clay; Behold the pearl is now a speck of mire".

Moreover, the gods are the guardians of humanity,—the searchers of human hearts. They put temptations in the way of aspirants, "to see how far they are worthy and reliable, testing all their weak points in order that those weak points may be gotten rid of, trying them where there is a germ of vice still remaining, in order that that germ of vice may be eradicated".* Thereby they do a signal service to humanity; otherwise how could the unwary but over-confident aspirant have discovered his hidden imperfections. Blind to his latent defects—the aspirant strives to attain the supreme knowledge. If the defect were not disclosed to him at the very outset of the path, he would soar high only to sustain an equally mighty fall. The path, as we know, is high and precipitous and is narrow like the razor's edge. It is only the sure-footed who may tread it with safety. The tiniest germ of evil, the slightest trace of sin, the smallest speck of weakness is enough to send the traveller headlong into the gaping abyss below. So it is said in the "Voice of the Silence," "Strive with thy thoughts

*Mrs. Besant's "Evolution of Life and Form," page 72.

unclean before they overpower thee. Use them as they will thee, for if thou sparest them and they take root and grow, know well, these thoughts will overpower and kill thee. Beware, disciple, suffer not even though it be their shadow to approach. For it will grow, increase in size and power, and then this thing of darkness will absorb thy being before thou hast well realized the black foul monster's presence."

What the Devas do is by putting temptations before us to help us in discovering our defects and thus save us from most terrible falls. So the Jewish scriptures speak of God tempting Job. Our own scriptures are full of such instances of the Devas acting as tempters of humanity. We have seen that the dark powers fulfil the same role.

^{Devas as sear-} Wherein then does the difference lie? The ^{chers of hearts.} Asuras tempt to undo while the gods tempt, to help the aspirant, their temptations being always designed for his real good. So that though outwardly the same in appearance, the aims and objects of the white and the dark powers are totally different. The difference is the same as that between the murderer wielding his knife to take away the life of the intended victim and the surgeon operating on a hidden abcess to save the patient's life. The process is no doubt attended with pain but it is inevitable and is always followed by beneficial results. The path though a path of knowledge and power is also one of pain and suffering due to the forcible killing out of desire, of every thing that is low and sordid and disharmonious with the Divine Life. So it is said, "Ere thy soul's mind

can understand, the bud of personality must be crushed out, the worm of sense destroyed past resurrection".

That this is so, becomes abundantly clear if we examine the nature of the temptations which the Devas put in the way of the aspirant. These temptations have always this characteristic mark that their nature is correspondent with the particular weakness of the aspirant that is sought to be eradicated. For instance, when the Rishi Vishwamitra ^{Vishwamitra and Dhruba.} nourishing in his heart of hearts the germ of sensuality has to be tempted, the gods send down a fairy of bewitching beauty. But when the subject to be tempted is a boy-ascetic like *Dhruba* they rain down upon him all kinds of physical horrors so as to shake his nerves. But the most characteristic illustration of this truth is furnished by the tempting of Yudhishthira in the Mahabharata. Only the tempter in this instance is not any god but the incarnation of Deity himself—Shreekrishna. The incident is so graphically described in the "Evolution of Life and Form" and its lessons so convincingly brought out, that I cannot resist the temptation of transcribing the entire passage. "Yudhishthira is sad at heart. He is struggling, has failed ^{The temptation of Yudhishthira.} and is in danger. Drona is there leading the hosts of his enemies. * * No one is able to stand against Drona.* What can be done ? Yudhishthira is in despair! * * Is he to be conquered? A stainless king was this son of Pandu but with a strain of weakness in him which in critical times will sometimes shew, a too great readiness to yield; too little of the Kshatri-

ya's power of standing alone against any force that might be brought to bear against him; a little germ of weakness was there, that had in it the possibility of a fatal fall. Shreekrishna is there, the great Avatar, and Bhima comes rushing up from the battlefield saying that he has slain an elephant whose name is the same as the name of the son of Drona. If Drona hear that his son Ashwatthama is dead, he will drop his weapons, he will let go his enemy; no further will he fight when his beloved is gone. 'I told him that Ashwatthama was dead but he would not believe me; he sent me to you saying that Yudhisthira is a devotee of truth, he will not tell a lie for the sovereignty of the three worlds. If he says Ashwatthama is dead, I will believe.' Terrible is the strain, mighty the force brought to bear against the man who has a weakness in him; and Shreekrishna standing by him, watching him steadfastly, advises him to utter that which is not true. God advises this almost blameless man to tell a lie? How strange the scene! Yudhisthira, yielding to Shreekrishna, tells the falsehood, and Drona lets fall his weapons and is killed. If the story stopped there, we might well be puzzled. If Yudhisthira's life was no further told, we might well ask: what is this that we have studied? But when we remember one of the great functions of the Teacher, the Gurudeva, is to bring out any weakness inherent in his pupil, because otherwise that weakness will keep the man tied and he will not be fit to be liberated, we pause and read on. When that lie was spoken, the chariot of Yudhisthira sank down-

wards to the ground, no longer able to support itself, truth having been violated. And as years went on, the bitterness of that memory of a falsehood remained; the sorrow of the slaying of the preceptor by a lie ate deep into the heart of the king; he never recovered from it he never got rid of its effect; over and over, again, he breaks from his repose in anguish; "I have slain my Guru." The sorrow worked and the shame, till the anguish purified that noble soul from the last stain of weakness; and when the Great Journey is over, when wife and brothers lie dead behind him and he utters not a word of protest against the death of his beloved, when he stands ready to ascend to heaven, then only one living creature remains with him, the dog who had followed after him faithfully through all his wanderings since he left his capital. When that dog remained his sole companion, trusting his master's love faithfully unto death, then comes down a mighty God and stands beside him. "Your time has come; mount on my celestial chariot; and ascend in your body unto the heaven where you have won the right to sit and reign." Will he now yield to the invitation of the God? He said: "This dog is here; he has trusted to my protection and I cannot leave him alone, I must take him with me." The god answered: 'Dogs have no place in heaven; dogs are unclean, no place for them is there; you have left your dead brothers behind, and your wife when she perished; why should you remain still with this dog?' "They are all dead," he answered, "for the dead the living can do nothing. This creature is still

living and has sought my protection : I will not abandon him". "Nay," the God said, "be not so foolish ; leave the dog there." But Yudhisthira stood firm ; he was strong enough to stand against the God and to show righteousness and fidelity to the poor brute that had placed his love in him ; unless he might take the dog with him, he would stay on the earth and do his duty. Such lesson had he learnt from his fall ; such is the result of the working of Shreekrishna on his evolution."* This shews the vital difference between the workings of the white powers and the dark powers—the Devas and the Asuras. The motive of the former is the uplifting of humanity, whereas that of the latter is its undoing. But the result, it must be admitted, is often identical. Both sets of power, by doing according to their 'kind'—by following their respective Dharma, but subserve the mighty world plan of the Logos which knows no shadow of turning. Both sets of energies are utilised by Him in forwarding the evolution of His system, which is the one thing that is of supreme consequence.

We have now considered some of the main objections that are urged against the gods and will now proceed to discuss the question of their frightful (?), immorality.

§ 10. FRIGHTFUL IMMORALITY OF THE GODS.

Apparently this is a more serious objection against the gods than those that we have been hitherto considering. The so-called immorality of the gods supplies

* Mrs. Annie Besant's—"Evolution of life and form"—pp 75 to 78.

a convenient handle to the enemies of our religion to direct their malicious attacks against our faith. In doing this they shew themselves wholly ignorant of the blinds

Exoteric blinds. used by the Rishis to guard the higher secrets of life from profane eyes. The man in the street is so much repelled by the garb of immorality in which many of these secrets are clothed that he does not further trouble about them. We ought to remember that carnality is often the most convenient vesture wherewith to clothe the spiritual truths and that it is only the prurient in imagination and the vicious in heart who see evil in these things. To Milton, the Puritan poet, the amorous dalliance of Adam and Eve had nothing objectionable in it.

We will take some extreme instances and see what can be made of them. We read in the Puranas of *Brahma* ficundating his own daughter. Taken literally this is extremely shocking. Let us however dive below the surface. Now this daughter of Brahma is no other than virgin matter, the primordial world stuff, the virgin Mary of the Christians. She is appropriately called the *** Brahma and Vach.** daughter of Brahma because having been latent within him at the time of *Pralaya* it emanates out of him at the dawn of creation. This matter is impregnated by the Divine Energy at the time of creation. As Shreekrishna says in the Gita, Mahat Brahma (Mula Prakriti) is the womb in which He places the Divine Seed. Thus vivified by the potency of Brahma, Prakriti evolves into this multiform universe. Verbally understood the myth—for so it is—is grossly carnal,

but rightly interpreted it is the embodiment of a great spiritual truth. With reference to this, Madame Blavatsky writes as follows in the "Secret Doctrine" Vol. I, page. 465. "And here we may incidentally point out one of the many unjust slurs thrown by the 'good' and pious' missionaries in India on the religion of the land. The allegory in the Shatapatha Brahmana that Brahma as the father of men performed the work of procreation by incestuous intercourse with his own daughter *vach* also called Sandhya, twilight and Shatarupa, of a hundred forms, is incessantly thrown in the teeth of the Brahmins as condemning their 'detestable' false religion' ? * * There is certainly a cosmic and not a physiological meaning attached to the Indian allegory, since *Vach* is a permutation of Aditi and Mula-prakriti and Brahma a permutation of Narayana, the spirit of God entering into and fructifying Nature and therefore there is nothing phallic in the conception at all * *. She (Vach) is generated by the Gods, she is the divine Vach, the 'queen of Gods' and she is associated with the Prajapatis in their work of creation. * * But when Vach is also spoken of as the daughter of Daksha, the God who lives in all the kalpas, her mayavic character is shewn ; during the pralaya she disappears—absorbed in the One all-devouring Ray."

Take another instance. We read in the Puranas, about Indra's amours with Ahalya and his lustful ^{Indra and Ahalya.} violation of his Guru's bed. The well-known Mimansaka writer Kumarila Bhatta notices this incident and gives an allegorical explanation, which

we find quoted in Maxmuller's 'History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature.'* "Sometimes however we feel surprised at the precision with which even such modern writers as Kumarila are able to read the true meaning of their mythology; when Kumarila is hard pressed by his opponents about the immoralities of his Gods he answers with all the freedom of the comparative mythologists. 'In the same manner if it is said that Indra was the seducer of Ahalya, this does not imply that the God Indra committed such a crime; but Indra means the sun and *Ahalya* from *Ahan* and *li* the night and as the night is seduced and ruined by the sun of the morning, therefore is Indra called the paramour of Ahalya.''" **

Whatever might be thought of this explanation it is clear that the author was alive to the fact that myths are not to be interpreted in their literal sense, but were the store-house of spiritual verities which it was the task of the exegetes to unravel. We also read in the Tantric

^{A Tantric} books of the *Lingam* being cast into the ^{symbol} material matrix. This matrix is the causal body whereby the One Life is individualized in man. That the *Lingam* stands for the individuality becomes apparent when we recall to mind that the causal body is called the *Linga Sharira*. Now, to attain *Mukti* it is

* 2nd Edition p 529.

** एवं समक्षतेजाः परमेश्वरलनिमित्तेन्द्रशब्दवाच्यः सवितेषाइनि खीयमानतया रात्रे रहस्या शब्दवाच्यायाः च्यात्मक अरथहेतुत्वात् जीर्णेति 'असात् अनेन बीदितेन वा इत्यहस्याजार इत्युप्यते । न परस्पौर्व्यभवारात् ।

necessary that the notion of individuality should be surrendered by merging the individual colouring, which in man gives rise to self-limitation, in *Prakriti* the action of which gives rise to it. The freedom of the inner life can only be accomplished by the knowledge that the particular body in which it is bound is a product of the non-ego and by reducing it to its final cause. Thus we find that these and other blinds were purposely used by the ancient teachers so that while those who are ready might receive illumination from the exoteric books, these high spiritual truths may be guarded from those who are yet unfit to receive them.

Myths, as we know, are the pictorial forms in which certain profound truths were given to the world and it is well to bear in mind that a great many of the Puranic stories to which exception is taken by the uninitiated are such myths.

“Now, a ‘myth’ is by no means what most people imagine it to be—a mere fanciful story erected on a basis of fact, or even altogether apart from fact. A myth is far truer than a history, for a history only gives a story of the shadows, whereas a myth gives a story of the substances that cast the shadows. As above, so below; and *first* above and *then* below. There are certain great principles according to which our system is built; there are certain laws by which these principles are worked out in detail; there are certain Beings who embody the principles and whose activities are the laws; there are hosts of inferior beings who act as vehicles for these activities, as agents, as instruments,

there are the Egos of men intermingled with all these, performing their share of the great cosmic drama. These multifarious workers in the invisible worlds cast their shadows on physical matter, and these shadows are "things"—the bodies, the objects, that make up the physical universe. These shadows give but a poor idea of the objects that cast them, just as what we call shadows down here give but a poor idea of the objects that cast them; they are mere outlines, with blank darkness in lieu of details, and have only length and breadth, no depth.

History is an account, very imperfect and often distorted, of the dance of these shadows in the shadow-world of physical matter. Any one who has seen a clever shadow-play, and has compared what goes on behind the screen on which the shadows are cast with the movements of the shadows on the screen, may have a vivid idea of the illusory nature of the shadow-actions, and may draw therefrom several not-misleading analogies.

Myth is an account of the movements of those who cast the shadows; and the language in which the account is given is what is called the language of symbols. Just as here we have words which stand for things—as the word "table" is a symbol for a recognised article of a certain kind,—so do symbols stand for objects on higher planes. They are a pictorial alphabet used by all myth-writers and each has its recognised meaning. A Symbol is used to signify a certain object just as words are used down here to distinguish one thing from another,

and so a knowledge of symbols is necessary for the reading of a myth. For the original tellers of great myths are ever Initiates, who are accustomed to use the symbolic language, and who, of course, use symbols in their fixed and accepted meanings". *

Until we succeed in developing the necessary intuition to be able to read these symbols correctly and decipher their underlying meanings, the Puranic stories will remain for the most part a sealed book to us. But in the meantime it will be well to bear in mind the luminous words cited above so that we might cultivate the correct attitude towards these symbolic representations of truth. Regarded in this light, the stories in the Puranas dilating on the carnality of the gods need not repel us. We should never forget that on any other hypothesis the conduct of a nation whose worldly life was an embodiment of purity and who laid so much stress on the cultivation of the higher virtues, taking delight in the study of the Puranas would be utterly inexplicable.

In this connection it is useful to recall the weighty words of Madam Blavatsky. "The tree is known by its fruit, the nature of a god by his actions. We must judge these actions by the dead-letter narratives or must accept them allegorically * *. Whatever may be thought of the Hindus, no enemy of theirs can regard them as fools. A people whose holy men and sages have left to the world the greatest and most sublime philosophies that ever emanated from the

* Mrs. Annie Besant's 'Esoteric Christianity' pp 152-154.

minds of men, must have known the difference between right and wrong. Those who have narrated this event in the biography of their gods must have seen that it was that god who was the arch-deceiver (H. P. B. is speaking here of Vishnu seducing the *daityas* from the path of rectitude by his sophistries in the guise of Maya-moha as narrated in the *Vishnupurana*) and the *daityas* were the true 'gods'. Thence there must have been and *there is* a secret meaning hidden under this allegory. In no class of society, in no nation, are deceit and craft considered as divine virtues"*

It is often objected that the multiplicity of the gods ^{The gods obs-} serves but to obscure the unity of the God-
_{cure the God}
_{—head.} head and is thus incompatible with true theism. This objection is a futile one. As well we may demand that in music, only single notes must be used to produce harmony and the endless combinations of sub-notes altogether eschewed. The Infinite can only be conceived by the finite intellect in Its endless manifestations. To limit the Supreme by clothing Him in our own rigid conception is really the acme of anthropomorphism. To one whose eyes have opened, the multiplicity of forms cannot affect the unity of the One Life. Rather the manifoldness of its manifestations serves to correct and gradually to eradicate our anthropomorphic tendency. It is the vain and self-conceited who alone dare to limit the manifestations of the One Life. Which is richer? The music produced by the dull

* *Secret Doctrine*, Vol I, p. 454.

monotony of single notes or the complex harmony produced by the unison of a variety of tones? We will have some thing further to say on this point in our last section—"Gods and the God."

§ II. THE FUNCTIONS OF THE GODS.

We will next deal with the functions of the gods, following in this the general outlines sketched with such remarkable lucidity by Mrs. Annie Besant in her lectures on the "Evolution of Life and Form".

The Devas, it should be borne in mind, are not like the epicurean gods of whom it is said that they but drink ambrosia in their heavenly abodes and doze away through the æons of manifestation. But they lead a life of strenuous effort and discharge some very important functions in the economy of the universe.

Their most important function seems to be "to ^{Directs of} Evolution. guide evolution, to adapt, to correlate to carry out the living will of the Supreme." The world has to be rolled up along the evolutionary road marked out by the will of the Divine. It has to be taken along the *Ritamarga* (ऋतमार्ग), the straight path. No doubt there is the original impulse imparted by the Divine, which ought to take it to its goal, if there were not interfering causes to make it swerve away now and again. For, the world is not an automaton—a lifeless will-less mass, but is inhabited by living beings who are possessed of vitality and free will. They therefore put obstacles in the path so as to make the world deviate from its

appointed goal. Here comes in the function of the gods who thereupon appear on the scene and give a counter push in the right direction. Take an example. You push a ball, you push it straight in a particular direction ; another man comes in and gives it an opposite push in the counter direction ; then a third push is given to the ball in a direction contrary to the other two ; and the result is that the ball goes in a direction which is the resultant of all these pushes. So whenever by working their own wills, men have succeeded in giving a wrong direction to the evolution of the world, the gods have to interfere and adjust the balance ; so that the world may go along the right path. It sometimes happens that the wheels of progress get hopelessly stuck in the world's mire so that the *Devas* are impotent to extricate them and then the Deity has to come down himself and incarnate as an *Avatar*. Before Him all difficulties disappear and the world is again put on the right road of evolution. As Shreekrishna says in the *Gita*, whenever there is an ascendancy of unrighteousness and the decadence of righteousness, then the Deity incarnates himself in order to re-establish the equilibrium.* Now one function of the gods is to incarnate on earth to forward the divine purpose when the Logos himself ^{Helpers of the} incarnates. So it is said in the Hindu ^{Logos.} books that the Lord incarnates 'Sangopanga' with His limbs and members. Thus we read in the Ram-

* यदा यदा हि धर्मस्य भ्लानिर्भवति भारत

ध्युत्यानमधर्मस्य तदात्मानं सृजात्यहम् ॥

[गीता—४४ अध्याय]

ayana that when Visnu took birth as Ram Chandra many of the gods incarnated on the earth and took their allotted parts in the drama which was then enacted on the stage of the world and of which Shri Rama was the central character. So when the Lord incarnated as Shree-krishna many of the gods came down as his companions and allies. First of all there was the great Bhishma, the dauntless warrior, the truthful son, the embodiment of Dharma—he who was one of the Vasus. Then there was Vidura of whom it is said in the Bhagabata Purana that he was Yama himself. There was also the sage Vyasa, the divine author of the Bharata, the compiler of the Vedas, the redactor of the Puranas, of whom it is said that he was the Rishi Apantaratama of a past age, who had become merged in the Supreme but who came out of his supreme abode to help the Lord and put on record his divine *lila* on earth. Lastly there were the five Pandava princes, the chief allies of Shreekrisna in his life work. It is said in the Mahabharata that they were the five Indras of by-gone kalpas.

We have already seen that each of the seven planes of the cosmos is presided over by a great God, so that we have the seven cosmic Gods having charge of the seven planes. Each of these great beings has under him a host of minor Gods who act as his ministers and carry out his will. So it is true that behind every phenomenon a God is working. Not a fire that burns, not a stream that flows, not a ray of light that shoots through space, not a breath of wind that stirs in the ether, not a thunder that rumbles

Behind every phenomenal veil.

but is the veil of a Deva, has a Deva working at the back of it. The Rishis of old knew this truth and so in the Vedas they have composed hymns in praise of Agni, Vayu, Indra, Surya &c. This candle burns. We see nothing beyond the burning but the Rishis saw the God Agni at the back of it. Candlelight, electricity or fire,—behind all these the God Agni is at work and seeing His face to face the rishis prescribed appropriate rites and ceremonies to approach him.

Another important function that the gods discharge ^{Teachers of} is to serve as teachers and guides of the humanity. more advanced ranks of humanity. After a human ego has by his own efforts reached a certain stage of development, the gods take him by the hand and guide his spiritual evolution. Thus we read in the Vishnu Purana that it was the *Saptarsi* (according to the Bhagabata Purana it was *Narada*) who initiated the boy devotee Dhurba into the mysteries of divine worship. So in the Chhandogya Upanishad we read of the Rishi boy Jabala having received direct teaching from the God Agni. So in the Kathopanishad we read of Yama imparting to the devout Nachiketas secret teachings as to life and death. Instances like these may be multiplied but it is unnecessary to do so I think the poet Milton had an inkling of this fact and it is therefore that in the Paradise Lost he has made the archangel Gabriel expound some of the mysteries of creation to the first man Adam, who may in this be taken to be the prototype of humanity. This ought to have a heartening effect on all aspirants ; for they may be quite sure that at every stage of the

path, they will be met by competent guides who will take them onward to the next higher stage.

Another function of the gods is that they preside over the senses and are the means of
They preside over the senses. converting the sense-vibrations into sensations.

So in the Isa Upanishad the senses are called *Devas* and it is said with reference to them that the *Devas* (meaning the sense-organs) were unable to reach up to the Lord moving forward.* And the Aitareya Upanishad in mystic phraseology teaches that the *Devas* (gods) entering the body became the senses of man. So it is written, 'The Fire becoming speech entered the mouth. The Wind becoming breath entered the nostrils. The Sun becoming sight entered the eyes. The Airs (दिशः) becoming hearing entered the ears. The Herb-gods becoming hairs entered the skin. The Moon becoming mind entered the heart. The Death becoming the downward breath entered the navel. The Waters becoming seed entered the *Sisna*'.† 'That is to say the *Devas* who are the spiritual Intelligences behind phenomena build the inner body in which reside the active senses of man:—not the bodily organ but the seeing sight; not the bodily organ but the sense of hearing; not the bodily organ but the sense of speech; not the bodily organ but the sense of touch. All these sense-centres result from the

* नैनद् देवाः प्राप्तवन् पूर्वमर्षत् ।

† Aitareya Upanishad,—ch. I—4.

Devas, who are concerned with the different types and kinds of perception and who entering the form give to man the power of sensation.* It is the Devas who fix the vibratory power of the different senses and set the limits within which each organ can respond. A bright object strikes the eye and produces certain vibrations in the sensorium. How are these vibrations translated into the sensation of light? Through the intervention of the god concerned with the particular sense. But for his intervention an external vibration will always remain an affection of matter and could never be transformed into an act of consciousness, into what is called a mental image. Thus it is the Devas who bridge the gulf between the molecular vibration and the mental image, making knowledge a possibility.

Another function of the gods is the moulding of forms in the mineral, vegetable and animal ^{They mould forms.} kingdoms. Now, speaking first of the mineral kingdom, we are taught that it is the Devas who shape the minerals, their masterpieces in this kingdom being the crystals. Now if we take up a crystal for examination, we can not fail to be at once struck with the beauty and symmetry of its form, and if inquisitive we are led to inquire as to how these have arisen. Let us hear what Professor Tyndal has said in this connexion. In his Manchester Lectures, Sixth

* The Pilgrimage of the Soul p 8. It is probable that the German poet Goethe had an inkling of this truth when he said that it is because the sun is concerned with the eye that the eye can respond to light.

Series, the Professor, speaking playfully of the work of the atomic architect in the formation of crystals, says : 'Atom' is thus added to atom, and molecule to molecule, not boisterously or fortuitously but silently and symmetrically and in accordance with laws more rigid than those which guide a human builder when he places his bricks and stones together' and with reference to the wonderful processes of crystallisation, he talks of 'expanding flowers each with six petals growing longer and longer and assuming as they do so, beautifully crimped borders ; showing, if I may use such term, the pains and skill and exquisite sense of the beautiful displayed by nature in the formation of a common block of ice'. Now, whose could this skill and sense of the beautiful and these pains be, if not of the Devas, who guide the evolution of this as of the other kingdoms of nature ?

If we turn next to the vegetable kingdom and take up a book on botany, we may read there of the many and various devices of plants—devices of colours, scents, arrangements and forms whereby plant life is fostered and improved. Now, who is it that works to bring about the wonderful adaptations seen in the vegetable kingdom ? Who is it that is responsible for the curious variations noticed by botanists—'spontaneous variations' as they are called, as if such a thing could possibly be ? Is it blind Nature who foresees the results and works to secure them ? The suggestion will be hardly acceptable to any, who will regard the matter with attention.

Think for one moment of the ingenious contrivances by which cross fertilisation is brought about, how honey

is often kept hidden in places to reach which the flying insect (whom Nature uses as the great agent of cross-fertilisation) must submit to be dusted with pollen and thus forced to carry it to the next flower which it visits in its perigrinations ; and in order that the point may be brought home to the reader who is not acquainted with Botany, I shall here put together a few facts gathered from books on the subject.

Now flowers, as has been well said by Grant Allen, are the husbands and wives of plants, and while the very lowest plants are sexless, in many of the higher plants the sexes are as fully separated as in birds or beasts ; while in others the sexes are muddled up on the same plant so that males and females grow side by side. Now, as in animals, so in plants it is necessary that the male cell and the female cell should come together to produce a new individual. So we find that the higher plants are provided with the necessary organs, the stamen which produces the male or pollen cell and the pistil which produces the female cell or ovule ; and in order that a child may be born to these plants, it is necessary that the ovule should be fertilised by the pollen. As is pointed out in books on Botany, 'to effect fertilisation pollen grains from the anthers of the stamens must come into contact with the ripe stigmas of the pistils. This accomplished, the ripened pollen grains germinate by pushing a slender tube into the ovary, where they reach the eggs or ovules. The contents of the pollen grain having entered the egg-cell, a wonderful change takes place. The egg changes into a seed containing an embryo or young

plant. The ovary also immediately develops into what is known as the seed-vessel. The seeds become in due course fully grown, and when matured the seed vessel or ripened ovary liberates the seed.

It is a wellknown law in Biology, holding good equally in the vegetable as in the animal world, that "marrying in and in" (what the Hindus call *Sagotra* marriage) tends to produce weak and feeble offspring, while "an infusion of fresh blood" tends to make both plants and animals stronger and more vigorous. Now, the male and female flowers which grow up on the same plants stand towards each other in the relation of brothers and sisters or at any rate of first cousins. It is therefore undesirable that a flower should fertilise itself by letting its pollen fall upon its own pistil ; and herein comes the importance of what is called cross-fertilisation. It is necessary for the well-being of plant life that pollen should be carried from one plant to another and some means devised to bring about this consummation so that a flower in the higher species of plants may not fertilise itself by letting its pollen fall upon its own pistil.

Now the means devised by Nature for the purpose of ensuring cross-fertilisation is to allure insects, flies and in some cases wasps by means of flaunting advertisements in the shape of coloured petals (technically called corolla) and by offers of bribe in the form of sweet honey stored away in convenient places so as to induce them to visit the flowers ; and as they did so, they would be sure to carry pollen on their heads and legs which

they would rub off on the sticky stigma of the next flower they visited. As Grant Allen points out in his "Story of the Plants" page 94, 'the plants finding the good cross-fertilisation did them, began in time to bribe the insects by producing honey in the neighbourhood of their pistils and stamens, and also to attract their eyes from afar by means of those alluring and brilliantly coloured advertisements which we call petals. Later on speaking of the orchids he says that it would be quite impossible for him to give any account of the infinite devices invented by these plants to secure insect-fertilisation ; and he waxes eloquent when speaking of the extreme ingenuity with which, to use his own words, "members of this family often arrange their matrimonial alliances" and advises his readers to read Darwin's romantic book on this subject so as to be able fully to appreciate the various "clever dodges" which the orchids employ in order to ensure cross-fertilisation. Of course, he is careful to point out that the plants are only unconscious agents and don't know what they are doing ; though how that is possible he does not stop to explain.

Another device hit upon by Nature to prevent marrying in-and-in in plants, where the male and the female flowers both grow up in the same tree, is to make the stamens ripen first and the sensitive surface of the pistils afterwards, or to make the stigmas to mature first and then ripen the stamens. A remarkable instance of this occurs in the case of the cuckoopint, and in order to bring home to my readers the exquisite devices of Nature in the vegetable kingdom, I shall quote an account

of this from a magazine article of Mr. Percival Westell's who speaking of this plant writes as follows : "Examine a plant during the spring, open out the spathe, and you will probably find several small insects secreted right at the base of the spadix, just near the pistils. Over 100 small insects have been found inside one plant ! These insects crawl inside the spathe and proceed downwards. The hair-like rudimentary stamens and barren pistils do not deter their progress, for they have their ends curved downwards for the most part, and help, rather than bar, the insect visitors. They get to the base of the spadix, and then ascend, but on going up find their progress barred by the barren pistils and the rudimentary stamens ! They thus find themselves prisoners, and descend once more to the base, in the little cupshaped bottom depicted in Fig. 1. Here they remain. But, you will remark, for what purpose ? Because Nature has ordained that those minute insects are to play an important part in the fertilisation of this plant. By and by, the anthers of the stamens ripen, the pollen falls upon the bodies of these insects. About the same time the hair-like objects which have imprisoned them wither and dry up, they climb the spathe or the spadix, and find themselves liberated ! What do they do then ? Hie away to a neighboring cuckoopint plant, crawl inside the spathe, hasten to the base, and the pistils there being ready to receive the precious pollen the insects laden with the pollen from the plant just vacated, move up to them which results in it falling from their valuable little bodies

on to the pistils, the stigma receives the essential grains, and fertilisation is effected."

Now take another case, that of the English Figwort. "This is a curious, lurid-looking, reddish-brown blossom, shaped somewhat like a helmet, and it is fertilised almost exclusively by wasps. Its shape and size exactly adapt it for a wasp's head ; and it blooms at the time of the year when wasps are numerous. Now, wasps as you know, are carnivorous and omnivorous creatures ; so the figwort, to attract them, looks as meaty as it can, and has an odour not unlike that of decaying mutton." We have seen that honey is provided in flowers for a special purpose, viz, to induce the visit of flying insects which go from one flower to another of the same sort and so promote cross-fertilisation—"who attracted by colour and shape of petals keep to one brand of honey at a time and never mix their liqueurs". It is, therefore, important to keep off ants and other creeping insects and we find that plants usually possess advanced devices for preventing these climbing thieves from stealing their precious honey. 'Hairs on the stalk and calyx of flowers are enough to secure this object in plants which have a long stem and are not therefore easy to climb ; but in a plant which has a shorter stem, this device is not alone sufficient, so that the calyx is made on opening to turn down its separate sepals close against the stem in such a way as to form a sort of lobster pot out of which the creeping insect can never extricate himself."

Here we see clearly the hands of the Devas ; for if

we eliminate their activity these plant devices, become quite inexplicable.

So with animals, and here the 'protective variations' invented by nature at once arrest our attention. Insects are made to look like the plant on which they feed, so that the birds who hunt for them may overlook them. The plumage of birds often resemble the foliage which shelters them. Some snakes resemble the branch or herb on which they roost, to help them to catch their prey. Some fishes resemble the bank under which they hide.

But of all forms of protective modifications that of avine mimicry is the most curious and remarkable. Mimicry is defined by ornithologists as the imitation by a weak and defenceless bird of the colour of a stronger and more favoured one ; and they have noticed that the Cuckoos present some of the most interesting instances of avine mimicry. Certain species of these birds very closely resemble hawks, while others bear a remarkable likeness to certain game birds. On this subject, Wallace, in his Darwinism pp. 263-4, writes as follows :—'More perfect cases of mimicry occur between some of the dull-coloured orioles in the Malay archipelego and a genus of large honey suckers—the tropidorhynchi or friar birds. These latter are powerful and noisy birds which go in small flocks. * * The orioles on the other hand are weak and timid birds and trust chiefly to concealment and to their retiring habits to escape persecution. In each of the great islands of the Austro-malayan region there is a distinct species of

tropidorhynches and there is always along with it an oriole that exactly mimics it.'

It should be noted, as has been well pointed out by Charles Dixon, in his "Story of the birds" page 199, that this resemblance between distantly related species is apparently unconscious on the part of the species practising it.

In this connection, the protective colours and resemblances of birds should also be noticed. As the author last quoted remarks: 'No matter what description of haunt we select, we are pretty sure to find within it birds of some kind presenting in various ways, protective modifications of colour, not only for purposes of concealment from enemies, but in some cases to enable them better to steal upon their prey'; and after noticing the cases of the desert birds who are almost invariably clothed in plumage, so exactly resembling in tint the ground upon which they live that their discovery is next to impossible and of the coast birds like the Plover and the Sandpipes who live upon the sandy coasts and mud flats and are decked in tints that harmonise closely with the colours around them, and of the marsh birds with their peculiar striated or lined colours blending beautifully with the ribbon-like leaves of grass or sedge or in their garb of brown or yellow absolutely losing their identity amongst the tall brown stems and yellow leaves of the marsh vegetation, he calls attention to the fact that all these birds which are protectively arrayed are endowed with the faculty of rendering their concealment as effective as possible, either by always

alighting on spots where their tints harmonise the best with surrounding objects, or by crouching low to the ground, the tree trunk, the sand, and so forth, and there remaining absolutely motionless until the threatened danger has passed. In these situations they often so closely resemble a stone, a clod of earth, an excrescence on the bark, a heap of leaves, or the stalk and leaves of surrounding plants, that discovery is next to impossible.

A remarkable instance is recorded by Sir John Lubbock of the tricks of insects. A traveller in an American wood saw a beautiful flower growing at the top of a tree. He felt attracted and went to pluck it ; when lo ! the flower disappeared and a host of tiny insects scattered themselves on all sides. The flower was no flower at all. Myriads of insects had gathered together on the top of this tree and had arranged themselves in this beautiful flower's shape, evidently to deceive their enemy. Unless this be the work of the gods, it is inconceivable that thousands of insects could have gathered together and thinking out the form of the flower, had arranged themselves in this way so as to protect themselves from some common enemy. Western Science will try to explain this away by attributing it to instinct. This is no explanation at all. We have a truer explanation in our own *shastras* which teach us that it is the Devas who help the evolution not only of the human, but also of the mineral, vegetable and animal worlds.

Another and a most important function of the Devas is that they administer the Karmic law, both individual

and national ; they are the कर्मविधाता (Karma-bidhatas)—the dispensers of Karmic fruits. They weigh **They administer Karmic law** the deeds of each person when he is about to go into incarnation, and not only provide the mould of the etheric body (exactly suitable to his past karma) for the man's birth but also select his प्रारब्ध (prarabdha) karma—that portion of his total karma which is to be worked out in the incarnation that is about to take place, and choose his birth, unerringly guiding him to the place where he is to incarnate and where the appropriate parents and environment could be provided for the working out of his *prarabdha* karma. There is a belief current among our people that on the fifth day of a child's earth life, he is visited by the विधाता-पुरुष (Bidhata Purusha)—the Lord of Karma, who indites on his forehead the whole course of his future existence on earth. This is a wrong idea, for we have just seen that the *prarabdha* karma is defined and fixed long before a child is born.

Then again, the 'Devas bring people together and carry them apart, always for the working out of their individual karmas ; and men are guided to places and positions at definite times, according to those circumstances, which, by their karma, they must meet' *. 'It is they who constantly watch all through life to counter-balance the changes perpetually being introduced into man's condition by his own free will and that of those around him, so that no injustice may be done and Karma may be accurately worked out, if not in one way then

* Evolution of Life and Form, p. 71.

in another*. If a man's karma does not permit of a violent death, say by a railway collision, the Devas will take advantage of circumstances to make him miss the train. If he is not destined to find a watery grave by shipwreck, he will be made to change his plan at the last moment and to miss going by the ship which is to go down. But if his Karmic requirement is the other way then he will be guided to his doom and will meet with his 'accident'. Thus Karma works. It is undeviating. It cannot be turned away or interfered with. If a man is in a catastrophe which he ought to escape, a Deva will lift him out of the midst of it, and he will have what is called a 'providential' escape. A very good story is related to illustrate this point. In a thunder-storm which had burst out in one of the sandy plains of India, a number of wayfarers had taken shelter in a dilapidated temple—the only place of refuge available to them. The lightning precursing thunder was flickering in the heavens, off and on; but the thunder was not coming. One of the men suggested that there must be a sinner in the company on whose head the thunder wanted to fall, but was holding out, because it wanted to spare the others; and what they ought to do was that each one should stir out of the temple and stand for a while in the open ground. The suggestion was accepted by all and each man took his turn and went out into the open; but the thunder did not fall. At last they discovered that a man was crouching in a corner,

* See Leadbeater's *Astral Plane*, pp, 86, 87.

trembling and beside himself, with fear. They dragged him out, and he was forced to leave the temple. Instantly there was a clap of thunder, but it descended, not on this man's head but into the temple and the whole lot of people were dead except him. People often wonder how in the dense tangle of Karma,—the result of actions done in many births and on different planes, anything like order or regularity is possible. No doubt the working out of Karma is very mysterious. But it would help us somewhat to unravel the mystery if we could think of some of the great Devas,—beings with immense power and wisdom, as manipulating the threads of Karma, as working and adjusting the karmic ledgers. This is symbolised by the Hindus in the person of *Chitragupta*, the keeper of the karmic records, he whose function is said to be the posting up of the debit and credit entries in the life-account of men and women. The Buddhists refer to them as the Lipikas—literally the recorders, the guardians of the Akasic records. They have to do with individual as well as with collective Karma and under their guidance, the national Devas—the angel-guides of the nations of the earth, administer what is called national Karma.

Now, a nation is a collection of individuals and the individuals forming the nation acting collectively may generate Karma and establish karmic relations with another nation. Suppose one nation commits a crime against another nation. If so, this must meet with karmic retribution and the scale readjusted. By whom and how? By the Devas, who bring the nations toge-

ther to balance up the accounts that are between them and so restore equilibrium and make each nation reap as it has sown. For the law of Karma is inexorable and though it may grind slow, it grinds exceeding small and the administrators of that law—the Devas, whose memory is perfect, are unflinching in their work. A remarkable case of this is noted by Mrs. Besant in her lecture on the Functions of the Gods to which I have had occasion to refer so often. She takes there the case of Spain to illustrate the tremendous working out of national Karma. When Spain was at the zenith of her power and was in the fore-front of the nations of Europe, she was given a great opportunity ; the newly discovered continent of America with its immense wealth and resources and inhabited by a gentle and ancient race was placed at her disposal. How did Spain acquit herself ? If we read the story of the conquest of Mexico and the still more terrible conquest of Peru, we may form some idea of the brutalities and barbarities practised by Spain and of the inhuman cruelties she perpetrated in dealing with the nations of America. Speaking of this matter, Mrs. Besant is led to use these eloquent words :—‘I have no time to wring your hearts, as I might, with the tale of the destruction of a great civilisation, of the killing out of the last exquisite traces in Peru of one of the most perfect civilisations that our world has ever known, of the crushing of the gentle Indian race there by chains, by imprisonment, shut out from the glorious sun whose children their Incas were. Too gentle to struggle, accustomed only to a life of flowers,

of music and of sunshine, they were crammed into caves that they were made to dig in ancient cliffs, dying by thousands upon thousands in the digging out of the gold and silver, which their Spanish conquerors demanded ; until the very name of the ancient nation perished, and only a few scattered Peruvian Indians remained to represent what was one of the fairest civilisations of the world. Such was the Karma made by Spain in the days of her glory'. Centuries rolled on and then the time came for the fruition of this terrible Karma of the Spanish nation. 'From the very country which they outraged, from the very land which they conquered, a new nation springs up as the centuries go on, to take up the old struggle between the two hemispheres and today we have seen America and Spain closing again in the death-grip ; but the scale of balance is now weighed down on the other side, and America becomes the karmic agent for working out the woes of the Aztecs and the Peruvians and for driving from the western hemisphere the nation that there outraged humanity in the centuries gone by'.* And thus was the balance between the two nations adjusted. I sometimes think that the fallen condition of the Hindu nation is the karmic retribution for their treatment, in the past, of the non-Aryan races of India, whom they had conquered. The decline began with the Kurukshetra war when the Kshatriya race who had theretofore guarded India like an impassable ring-fence was decimated. And it is related in the Mahabharata that the Devas guided by Lord Shrikrishna took part in their

* Evolution of Life and Form p. 67.

work of destruction—in fact were the main factors in bringing about the inevitable result. Then after her Kshatriya protectors had disappeared, India became the prey of successive conquerors. From Alexander the Great to Lord Clive, how many nations came and conquered India, oppressed and pillaged her, trod her under foot and denuded her of her treasures ! And the last act of the drama is not yet complete ; the bad Karma of India is still being worked out.

In the Puranas we read of Narada as a great fomentor of quarrels. Wherever there is contention, whenever wars are to be brought about, Narada is found at work. At first sight, this seems to be inexplicable ; because, as we have seen, Narada, who was a slave girl's son in a previous incarnation, raised himself by *tapas* and *yoga* to the height of a *Deva-rishi*. Is it not odd that he should be perpetually fomenting disputes ? The explanation seems to be that one of his functions is to bring nations and individuals together so that by contending with each other their Karmas may meet with their proper fruition.

The last function of the Devas that I shall notice here, is their work in destroying forms ; They break up forms. so that the Arch-destroyer—Death is, according to Hindu ideas, a Deva. Yama is the great god who presides over death which is another name for dissolution of forms and he is called धर्मराज (Dharmarajâ) because his actions are always guided by unerring justice and are, therefore, tempered with true mercy. It often happens that the form serves but to crib and confine the life which is the one

important thing and for whose evolution only the form is provided. It is then necessary to set free the cabined life which can then make for itself a new and more suitable form. And so the Devas work and break up the forms and they do their work without remorse ; because being what they are, they are not short-sighted as men are and can see with eyes of wisdom that the life is immutable and indestructible, that the Atma is not born nor does it die, that it never was not nor shall it ever cease to be, that for it the hour shall never strike. So they strike away the forms when their purpose has been fulfilled. And when this has to be done on a large scale, we have what are called the great convulsions of nature—floods and fires and earthquakes and cataclysms by which myriads of forms are engulfed in the sea of destruction. Think for a moment of the great catastrophe spoken of in the theosophical books—the going down of Atlantis below the waves of the great Atlantic Ocean by which a whole race was wiped out and a great civilisation was swamped away. Think of the millions of forms that perished and of the immense havoc and destruction that had to be wrought. How cruel, how heartless, is our first thought. But has not the result justified the event and fully demonstrated the wisdom of the Devas and proved that they work with a sole eye to the good of humanity, so that, to borrow the words of a great poet, though individuals might perish the race is more and more?

I have now sketched however briefly and inadequately the main functions of the Devas and will next pass

on to consider their relation to humanity and our proper attitude towards them.

§ 12. THE RELATION BETWEEN MEN AND GODS.

Devas exist, so do men in the same world-system. What ought to be the proper relation between the two ? What is the right attitude of men towards them ? On this point, it seems to me, the last word has been said by the Gita, ch. III.—10-12. "Having in by-gone ages created mankind along with sacrifice (Yajna) the Lord of creation (Prajapati) said unto them—'By this (Yajna) shall ye propagate ; Be this (Yajna) to you the giver of desires. With this, nourish ye the Devas and let the Devas nourish you ; thus nourishing each other, ye shall reap the supreme good. For nourished by sacrifice (Yajna) the Devas shall bestow on you the enjoyments you desire'. A thief verily is he who appropriates what they give without proper return".

This corroborates what we have already seen in dealing with the functions of the gods.

Yajnas to be performed. The Devas by discharging various cosmic functions—by giving light and heat, by sending down rains, by guiding animal and vegetable evolution, help and foster the growth of humanity. The least that men can do in return is to repay their obligations, if not from a feeling of gratitude for favours received, then from a lively sense of favours to come.

Because if men should do their duty in this connection, thereby the Devas would be nourished and so nourished would be enabled to confer further benefits on men. How? By the performance of Yajnas, by the transcendental fruits whereof the Deva-hosts are fostered. So the Hindu books speak of our देव-ऋण (Deva-rina)—

debt due to the Devas which men are
Deva-debt. enjoined to repay by performing Yajnas.

And the Gita also insists on the obligatory nature of Yajnas, saying that neither this world nor the next world is for him who does nor perform the Yajnas and that they who dress food for their own sake without offering to the gods verily eat sin. The Gita, therefore, lays down in broad terms that the wheel of *Sansara* is dependent on Yajna and therefore Yajna must be performed. 'From food creatures proceed ; from rain is the production of food ;' rain proceedeth from sacrifice and sacrifice results from action. * * * He who on earth does not follow this revolving wheel, sinful of life and rejoicing in the senses, he, O Son of Pritha, liveth in vain' [Gita, III—14, 16]. That is to say, for the harmonious working of nature, the performance of Yajnas is indispensable and men owe it to the gods and to themselves to perform proper sacrifices and thereby ensure this harmonious working.

Now, it may be asked, how can an offering given to a Deva reach him? How is it possible to nourish the Deva-hosts by making offerings on the physical plane, seeing that their bodies are composed of the finer matter of the astral and

Devas, how

nourished.

mental planes. The Rishis reply—**षग्निसुखा वै देवाः**—“the Fire is the mouth of the gods”—which means that offerings made to the Devas in the sacrificial fire under the prescribed rules laid down in the sacred books are transmuted into subtler forms so as to be rendered fit for assimilation by the Devas ; and thus the offering, through the medium of *Agni* (fire), reaches the god. Fire has this potency of transforming **खूल** (gross), first into **सूक्ष्म** (fine) and then into **कारण** (subtle) matter. Here the analogy of Homeopathic medicines may help us. Now, these are prescribed in some cases in very high dilutions. I know of one case where *Nux Vomica* in the 10000th dilution was prescribed and produced the desired effect. How is this done ? When thus diluted, the quantum of the drug is extremely minute ; but instead of losing, it gains in potency. How ? By becoming fit to be assimilated in its subtle form by the subtle bodies of the patient, and through them acting on the gross body. What the raising of the dilution does in the case of homeopathic medicines, is done in the case of *Yajnas* by the agency of fire, which transmutes the gross particles into subtle ones, which are then absorbed by the bodies of the Deva-hosts which thereby receive nourishment.

In this connection it is well to remember that in the sacred books, hand in hand with the **Shradhas for Pitris**, the Devas, the Pitris are mentioned and as injunctions are laid down for the performance of *Yajnas* for the Devas, so *shraddhas* are enjoined to cherish the *Pitris*. If we study the *shraddha*

ceremony we may understand our duties towards the Pitrис. Just as Yajnas are important for establishing harmony with the Devas, so Shraddhas are necessary to establish right relations with the Pitrис ; and the Vedas lay down that in making offerings to the Devas the appropriate formula is *Swaha* 'स्वाहा', whereas in the case of the Pitrис it is खद्धा (swadha), and the Pitrис are called खद्धामदः (swadhamadah)—'they who rejoice in *swadha*'.

Now, so long as these Yajnas were performed in India, everything went on well. But **Effect of Yajnas:** now ? Every thing is topsy-turvy. We have droughts, plagues, floods famines, pestilences and all the other physical ills to which a land may be a prey. Let us hear the weighty words of Mrs. Besant on this point. "But when these things were believed in and the ceremonies connected with them (she means Yajnas) were carried on, then nature worked in a definite order, and there were not the same continual irregularity that we have in our modern days. By that harmonious working between man and the gods, nature answered to man as man answered to nature ; while man did his duty, nature in her turn did her duty also ; the failure of rains, the failure of crops, the failure of sunshine, the presence of plague or of any other form of human misery, was seen as having its root in the failure of humanity : and man turned dutifully to that which he had neglected and they readjusted the balance which his irregularity had displaced". And we know that in all oriental countries, even to this day the king is held to be responsible for

the irregular workings of nature. If there is a prolonged drought, if there is a devastating flood, if there is a widespread pestilence, the people in the East will always ascribe them to the sinfulness of the sovereign ruling over them. At the first blush this may seem irrational ; but there is a deep wisdom at the back of this notion. The king is the प्रतिभु (Pratibhu)—the representative of the nation and as such the duty is cast on him to see that the harmonious working of nature is ensured by the due performance of sacrifices and other ceremonies for which the king is in the main responsible and thus man answering to nature, nature may in its turn answer to man.

Are we then to worship the Devas ? By no means.

Worship of Devas. Ishwara, the Supreme Being, is the only true object of worship and if ignoring or losing sight of Him, our worship should be confined to the Devas, we shall miss attaining the highest good. Of course, we may use the Devas as stepping stones in the path of spiritual progress and if unable with our finite minds to conceive or worship the Supreme God, we may step by step rise up to His height by the stair-way of these subordinate gods. So in the *Vyasa Bhasya* on the *Yoga* aphorisms a graded system of linked worship is spoken of and an aspirant is advised to worship first a *Mahatma*, then a Rishi, then a Deva and last of all the Supreme Being.* But at no stage should the worshipper lose sight of, much less ignore, the ultimate goal—Ishwara. If we will give a little thought to this matter, the

* ईश्वर-देवता-ऋषि-महानुभावानाम् ।

reason for this caution will at once become apparent. Now, if we worship a Deva what is the highest that we may thereby gain—either his सालोक्य (Salokya) or his सायुज्य (Sayujya) ; that is to say we may either attain to that plane of the cosmos of which that particular Deva is the overlord or become merged in his being, losing our own self-consciousness. But is either of these alternatives worthy of attainment as an ultimate goal ? Suppose a man by worshipping Indra reaches the heaven-world presided over by Indra. His stay there, cannot, in the nature of things, be everlasting. Its length will be commensurate with the quantum of his merit and no sooner are his good works worked off by the enjoyment of heavenly bliss, than he is bound to return to earth to take upon himself the burthen of a fresh incarnation. Thus it is said in the Gita that the performer of *Yajnas* ascending the holy region of Indra partake in heaven of the divine feasts of the gods ; and having enjoyed the spacious heaven-world, their good works exhausted, they come back to the mortal world. So this transitory bliss when weighed in the scale of eternity becomes of little consequence. Or, suppose the worshipper having with one-pointed devotion worshipped Indra succeeds in getting merged in Indra's being. Is that a consummation devoutly to be wished ? By no means. Because even Indra is impermanent ; he too is non-eternal. Like other created things he also is destined to pass away. So it is said, 'many thousands of Indras as of the other Devas, have come and gone in the course of time. Verily Time is all-devouring.' If Indra goes, as he is

bound to go some day or other, the person merged in him, goes also. Therefore from the point of view of immortality, this goal also is not worth striving after. This point is well brought out in the story of *Nachiketas* in the Kâthâ Upânisâd. It is related there that the Rishi-boy *Nachiketas* having gone to the abode of death was offered a boon by *Yama* and asked for the solution of the ever-recurring problem of life, death and immortality. *Yama* hesitated and offered him instead centenarian sons and grand sons and much cattle, horses, elephants and gold. "In wide-spread earth, *Nachiketas*, be king. Live thyself as many autumns as thou wilt. I make thee to enjoy all thy desires. Ask not concerning death". But *Nachiketas* was not to be tempted. He remained firm as a rock and insisted on the solution of the mystery. "All life is short at best. With wealth no man is to be satisfied. You can make me endure only so long as thou shalt thyself last. The boon for me is the one I have asked" ; and *Nachiketas* had his reward.

It is thus all-important that the goal of the worshipper should be the Supreme Being and none else. He is the end of evolution. As the planets are subordinate to the sun, so are the Devas subservient to Him. Shall we neglect the Master and turn to the servants ? Thus in the Gita, the warning rings out again and again, clear and forcible, "They who worship the Devas go to the Devas. The Pitri-worshippers go to the Pitris ; to the Bhutas go those who sacrifice to the Bhutas. But His worshippers come unto Him"*. Again it is said,

* Gita—9. 25.

“To the Devas go the worshippers of the Devas ; but My devotees come unto Me *. Therefore, says Shree-krishnâ, “Worship Me alone.† Why ? Because even from the world of Brâhma which is the highest plane of the universe, a worshipper is liable to fall ; but he who cometh to the Supreme Being, for Him there is birth no more”. ‡

As we have seen before, it is possible for a human being by adopting proper means to attain Deva-hood and what is said above about the Supreme Logos being the true goal of the worshipper does not touch this question or detract from the desirability of going along this particular line of evolution. Suppose a man deliberately works for Deva-hood, life after life, performing austere *tapas* and doing numerous sacrifices,—as the present Indra did, who is therefore called शतक्रतु (Shâtâkrâtu)—working incarnation after incarnation along one particular line of sex. If he is not working selflessly for जीवन्मुक्ति (Jivânmuksi) but motived by the desire to gain fruits, then it is likely that in the course of ages he will develop into a Deva. It does not, however, follow by any means, that in achieving this particular end, he has ignored the Supreme Logos. On the contrary, having attained this dizzy eminence he becomes a co-worker

* Gita—7. 23.

† In the same way the great Christian Apostle St. Paul deprecated the worship of Angels and such worship is rightly reprobated by many Christians as “Angeletry”.

‡ Gita,—8, 16.

with Him in carrying out the world-plan of evolution and thus, in the long run, the efforts he put forth for achieving Deva-hood come back to humanity in the shape of benefactions rendered by him to the world of men ; for, a Deva of the higher grades is always a friend of humanity.

§ 13. THE GODS AND *the* GOD.

I have heard it objected in all seriousness that a belief in the existence of the Devas and the divine hierarchy obscures the unity of the Godhead and is subversive of true monotheism. If the objector will make a serious study of the Hindu system he will be soon dis-abused ; because he will find that no system is more rigidly monotheistic than the Hindu. It lays as much stress as any other religion on the oneness of the Divine life and in the Hindu books the teaching rings out again and again, clear and insistent, that there is but one God (एक एव महेश्वरः). In fact our Scriptures go so far as to declare, with no uncertain voice, that He is one and without a second (एकम् वादितीयः). Nay, they do not stop there but go farther and say that whatever exists in this universe is Brâhm (God). No polytheism can live in this atmosphere and after the Hindu scriptures have declared not only for the oneness but the uniqueness of the Divine Life, it is futile to charge them with polytheism.

But it will be said that though this may not be polytheism, it is something as bad ; it is pantheism. Now, if

this much-abused term is to be understood in its ordinary western acceptance, then I say that the Hindu system decidedly is not pantheistic. It does not believe that God is exhausted by the universe or has become precipitated into it, in the same way as the cloud is by the rain. On the contrary, the Hindu teaching is that a mere fraction of Him suffices for the whole universe. Thus, Shree-Krisnâ says in the Gita, “I remain, pervading the entire universe with but a portion of myself.” * So it is said in the Purushâ Sooktâ of the Rig Vedâ that only a quarter of Him is all these beings and the other three quarters are immortality in the highest heaven.” † This thought that God is not only immanent in the universe but is also transcendent is what distinguishes Hindu pantheism from the pantheism, such as it is, of the west. It implies that though the Absolute self-limits himself in order that a universe may be, this is really no circumscription. For, as taught in several passages of the Upânishâds, He is within the universe, as well as beyond it, and in this connection the following verses may be referred to : ‘That is far, near too is That, That is of all this the within, of this all the without is That too.’ ‘Whatever there is in this universe,

* विष्ण्वाहमिद् रुत्समे कांशेन स्थिती जगत् ।

[गीता, १०।४२]

† पादीऽस्य विश्वाभूतानि विपादस्यामृतं दिवि ।

[पुरुषम् १]

whether seen or heard, Narayâna (God) is within it as well as without.' *

Having thus cleared the ground, let us proceed to a **Vastness of the Universe.** consideration of our subject. Now, this earth which we inhabit, is, as we know, a planet. Along with other planets,—Jupiter, Saturn, Mercury, Mars. etc.,—it revolves round the sun. In the same way as the moon revolves round and is a satellite of the earth, all these planets are the satellites of the sun ; and they together—the sun with its planets and their satellites etc.—constitute the solar system. The path described by these planets in their periodical revolutions round the sun—their orbit as it is called in Astronomy is oval in shape; so is the circle which circumscribes the solar system and forms its ring-pass-not, its farthest boundary limit. A solar system is therefore called a ब्रह्माण्ड (Brahmânda) in the Hindu books, reminiscent of its egg-like shape. Let us stop for one moment to consider the vastness of our solar system and the immensity of the space occupied by it. Now, we know that the diameter of the earth is 24,856 miles, and the sun is 13,00,000 times bigger than the earth. The brain grows dizzy to contemplate this vastness. And what is the measure of the space occupied ? Astronomers tell us that the

* तद दूरे तदु चान्तिके ।

तदन्तरस्य सर्वस्य तदु सर्वस्यात् वाच्यतः ॥

[ईश ५]

यद्य किञ्चित् नगत्सर्वं दृश्वते शुद्धतेऽपि वा ।

अन्तर्वृहिश्च ततसर्वं व्याप्त नारायणः स्थितः ॥

[नारायणीपनिषद्, १३ अनुवाक]

distance of our earth from the sun is 9,50,00,000 miles and of Neptune is 27,60,00,00,000 miles. That even does not set the farthest limits of our solar system.

Each star that twinkles in the heavens is, as we know from astronomy, a sun ; and there are altogether 2,00,00,000 stars in space. Some of these suns are even bigger than our sun. The star Serius is many times the size of the sun and Sir Robert Ball has calculated that one nebula-heap in the star-group Orion is many thousands of times bigger than our entire solar system including the sun and its planets etc. Again, the nearest star from our earth is the star Centuri and its distance is 2,47,50,00,00,00,000 miles. Now, when compared with other stars, Centuri is almost our nextdoor neighbour, for there are stars from which it takes so many as 18,000 years for light to reach the earth, and light, we know, travels at the rate of 1,85,000 miles per second. This may give us some idea of the immense space covered by the starry heavens.

There is reason to believe that each star-sun is the centre of a solar system with its own planets and satellites moving round it.

Many solar systems. If so, the number of solar systems hung up in space must be almost infinite. This speculation of Astronomy is confirmed by the teachings of the Hindu Shastras which declare that even if it were possible to count up the grains of sand, it would be impossible to do the same with the solar systems. * In another place it is declared

* संख्याचेद रजसामस्ति विश्वानां न कदाचन ।
(देवी भागवत, ६।३।७)

that universes are to be counted by the hundreds of millions. *

A fine simile is used in the Narayâna Upâniшâd to illustrate this point; and it is there said that crores upon crores of solar systems, similar to the one to which we belong, flash around it in space like shoals of fish in the vasty deep. † The Bhagâbâtâ Puranâ, in laying stress on the greatness of the Supreme God, speaks of Him as the centre from which emerge and into which re-emerge innumerable universes, like unto motes dancing in the sun-beam streaming through a window. ‡

It is also the teaching of the Hindu scriptures that each planet is presided over by a Mighty God who is in charge of it. He, who is connected with our planet, is spoken of as the spirit of the earth, the Sanskrit expression being, इथिवौ अभिमानिनी दे वता ; He is sometimes spoken of as Vishnu and the minor *avatars* मत्स्य, कुर्म, वराह, नृसिंह (Mâtsyâ, Kurmâ, Vâarahâ, Nrisinghâ), who had to do with the growth and formation of our globe, came out of him. §

* लक्ष्यन्ते इतर्गताश्वाचे काटिशो ह्येष राश्यः ।

[श्रीमद्भागवत, ११।१।४०]

† असा ब्रह्माण्डसा समन्ततः । स्यतानि एताङ्गानि अनन्त कीटि ब्रह्माण्डानि सावरणानि ज्वलन्ति । * * * * महा जलौघ मत्सर्व हृदानन्त संघवत् भमन्ति ॥——[नारायणीपनिषद्]

‡ ताङ्ग विधाऽविगणिता परमानुचर्या

वाताच्च द्वौमविवरसा च ते महित्वम् ॥

[श्रीमद्भागवतम्, १० स्कन्ध]

§ Where Vishnu stands for the spirit of the earth, the spirit of the sun to whom He is subordinate is spoken of as Mâha-Vishnu ; but

He is referred to in Mr. A. P. Sinnett's 'Constitution of the earth,' (page 22), as the Mighty Planetary and Solar Logoi. Being who presides over the growth and health of our planet, and the nucleus globe around which our earth is formed is spoken of by him as His great workshop and store-house of those incomprehensible energies which maintain the physical health of the planet. In other Theosophical books, He is spoken of as the Planetary Logos, the evolver and ruler of the planet. And as there are seven planetary systems included in our solar system, so the number of the planetary Logoi is given as seven. As the planets are subordinate to the sun of our system, so are these planetary Logoi subordinate to the Solar Logos; and it is said in the 'Ancient Wisdom' (page 450), that the vast hosts of builders (they would correspond to some of the higher Devas of the Hindu system) shape and fashion all forms after the ideas that dwell in the treasure-house of the Logos, in the universal mind, and that pass from Him to the seven (planetary Logoi); each of whom plans out his own realm under that Supreme direction and all-inspiring Life, giving to it at the same time, his own individual colouring. Thus the planetary Logos draws from the matter of the solar system the crude materials he requires, but elaborates them by his own life energies, specialising the matter of his realm from this common stock. This occult teaching so far confirms the nebular theory first enunciated by Laplace

ordinarily the term Vishnu is used as the generic name of the Beings in charge of the solar systems and the Supreme Being who is their overlord is called Maha-Vishnu.

and now generally accepted by Scientists, which teaches, that out of the whirling fire-mist which was the basis of the future sun, masses of incandescent matter separated off and these fiery rings afterwards by condensation formed into the several planets which now revolve round the sun.

These planetary Logoi are sometimes spoken of as Lokapalas (लोकपालः) and the great French mathematician and astronomer Kepler probably had them in mind when he spoke of the Regents who guide the motions of the planets in space. It is easy to talk of the Law of gravitation as solving the problem of the rotations and revolutions in the solar system ; but whence the initial motion and the direction of force ? Whose hand holds the reins as the planets run their courses in their orbits ? The Law of gravitation can only give us the *how* of the planetary motions but not the *why* ; and unless we posit the existence of these Regents or planetary Logoi, the riddle remains unsolved.

Now, beyond the planetary Logoi, there is the solar Solar Logoi. Logos who is in charge of our solar system. From our stand-point, it seems to be complete in itself, arising from a single Logos and sustained by his life. He is spoken of as the Being-in-the-sun (योऽसौ आदित्ये पुरुषः) and sometimes as *Narayana* seated in the lotus-seat of the solar system.* Some of the Upanishads speak of Him as the radiant *Purusha* who is golden up to the tips

* अद्यः सदा सविद्मख्यमध्यवर्ती ।

नारायणः सरसिकासन सविविष्टः ।

Of his finger-nails (आपस्त्वात् सुवर्णः). He is a Trinity——discharging the three functions of creator, preserver and dissolver—evolving a universe, maintaining it during its life period and withdrawing it into Himself at its ending. The Hindu books speak of Him in this connection as the *Trimurti* (त्रिमूर्ति). He is said to be ब्रह्मविष्णुशिवात्मकः—Brâhma from the view-point of creation, Vishnu from the view-point of preservation and Shiva from the view-point of dissolution. He is thus triune—three in one and one in three.

We have seen that there are innumerable *Brahmandas* or solar systems in space and as each system has its own solar Logos, we may expect that the number of solar Logoi would also be innumerable. This is exactly what is taught in the Hindu books as the following quotations will shew :*

‘As we cannot count the number of the solar systems in the universe, so the numbers of the Brâhmâs, Vishnus and Shivas presiding over them cannot be calculated; for each system has its own Brâhmâ, Vishnu and Shiva.’

* कीठिकीव्युतानीशे चाण्डानि कथितानि तु ।

तत्र तत्र चतुर्विना ब्रह्मानी हरयो भवाः ॥

असंख्यातात् रुद्राख्या असंख्यातः पितामहाः ।

इत्यथ असंख्याता एक एव महेश्वरः ॥

[लिङ्ग पुराण]

संख्याते द रजसांभलि विश्वाना न कदाचन ।

ब्रह्मविष्णुशिवादीना तथा संख्या न विद्यते ।

प्रतिविश्वे चु सन्ते ग्रन्थ ब्रह्मविष्णुशिवादय ॥

[देवौभाग्यत, ६१७-८]

'The Brahmandas are said to number tens of thousands of crores and they have Brahmás, Vishnus and Shivas as presiding Deities. The Rudras are innumerable in number, so are the Brahmás and so are the Vishnus.'

Are we then after all landed on a plurality of gods—on a system of magnified polytheism? By no means. For beyond all these Brahmás, Vishnus and Rudras (Shivas) and as synthesizing all the solar Logoi is the Maheshwara—the Central or Supreme Logos, Who is One only, without a second.—एक एव महेश्वरः. He is above and beyond these Logoic hosts, who are but His emanations*. It is therefore said that He is the Supreme Entity in the universe, above and behind these *Ishwaras*.† He is the *Brahmá* of Brahmás, the *Vishnu* of Vishnus and the *Shiva* of Shivas and is spoken of as the Supreme Trinity as महाब्रह्मा (Maha Brahmá) महाविष्णु (Maha Vishnu) and महाशिव (Maha Shiva) from the three points of view—the Ultimate and Supreme synthesis of the three aspects of creation, preservation and dissolution.

It will help us to realize this teaching if we make use of the analogy usually employed in the Hindu books. They say that in the same way as the forest is the synthesis of many trees and the ocean is the synthesis of many drops of water,‡ so Maheshwara (महेश्वर) is the synthesis of the many *Ishwaras* (ईश्वर) of the solar

* ब्रह्मविष्णुशिवा ब्रह्मन् प्रधाना ब्रह्मशक्तयः ।

ब्रह्म विष्णु शिवादीनां यः परः स महेश्वरः ।

† शिवतत्त्वमिति स्वातं शिवादपि परं पदम् ।

‡ हृष्णाणां समर्दिवन् जलानां समर्दि जलाशयः ।

systems. This analogy is defective in one respect ; because the forest or the ocean is only a congeries of units and has no separate corporate existence. A better analogy is furnished by the cells of the Biologists. We know, that "the cells composing an organism are regarded as individual units, each with a distinct life and function of its own. * * Every cell of the great colony of cells composing the organism of every animal and plant has thus its special work to perform—the work consisting in the extraction from its immediate environment of those materials which are necessary for its own growth and nutrition. But this work is entirely subservient to and indeed is solely performed for the ultimate nutrition and building up of the whole organism of which each individual cell forms a very small but yet necessary unit."

In the same way, we may regard each planetary Logos as a cell in the body of the solar Logos and each solar Logos as a cell in the body of the central or supreme Logos, to Whom they are all entirely subservient and Who is their Over-lord. Madam Blavatsky, in the Instructions printed as appendix to the third volume of the 'Secret Doctrine', has spoken of the *Dhyan Chohanic* body as a tree, thereby implying that as a tree has a separate corporate existence distinct from the individual cells composing it, so the whole body of *Dhyan Chohans* together form the vehicle of a higher entity who is the synthesis of them all. It has been suggested by some astronomers that in the same way as the planets of a solar system revolve round the sun who is

at the centre of that system, so all the solar systems revolve round a bigger central sun and are in fact his planets. This idea translated to the spiritual region gives us the key to unlock the Logoic mystery. We have first of all the planetary Logoi subordinate to a solar Logos and then we have the solar Logoi in their turn subordinate to the Central Logos, who is in the position of the central sun.

It has been further suggested that the stars, which we have seen are the suns of the solar systems, do not all revolve immediately round a common centre, but that there are several stellar systems in space, each with a bigger central sun, round which other suns revolve, and this body of suns with the central bigger sun constitute one separate stellar system ; and these central bigger suns in their turn revolve round other and more big central suns and so on and on, higher and higher, until we reach the Supreme Centre of all, round and towards which the whole creation moves. This, if true, does not go against the teaching of the Hindu system ; because some of the books throw out a hint that between the solar Logoi and the Central or Supreme Logos, there are the *Rashis* (राशि) or constellations—the group-stars or rather the Beings who preside over them and who synthesise in themselves the many solar systems subordinate to them. However that may be, the main truth, which we need to grasp firmly, is that above and beyond the planetary and solar Logoi and even beyond the *Rashi* Logoi, there is the Supreme Logos who is one only and without a second. This truth is well brought out in a

verse of an 'ancient book Sátwata Sanhita (सत्त्वत संहिता) which we find quoted in the commentaries of Shreedhara Swami.* "Vishnu manifests as the three *Purushas* ; the first is he who emanates from himself ^{The three} Purushas. Mahat or root matter, the second Purusha presides over the *Brahmandas* and the third Purusha is the 'over-soul'; by knowing these three one attains liberation." We can at once see that this third Purusha or over-soul is no other than the planetary Logos about whom we have been speaking. The second Purusha is the solar Logos—he who is in charge of a *Brahmanda* or solar system. The first Purusha of course, is *Maheshwara*—the Supreme Logos—he who is spoken of as अनन्तकोटि ब्रह्माख्याधिपतिः— the Overlord of countless millions of universes. The same teaching from the form-side is contained in the following verse which Shankaracharya (शङ्कराचार्यः) has prefixed to his great commentary on the Gita.† "Narayana (the supreme Logos) is beyond *Prakriti* (being the generator of *Prakriti*). From *Prakriti* comes out the *Brahmanda* ; within the *Brahmanda* are these Lokas (planes) with the seven-islanded earth." Here we have the same three grades enumerated one above the other. First of all, we have the seven planes of our planet, with of

* विश्वीस्तु वौषिं रूपाणि पुरुषाख्यात्यधी विदुः ।

आद्यन्तु महतः स्तृ द्वितीयं लक्ष्मसंस्थितम् ।

द्वितीयं सर्वभूतस्तम् तानि ज्ञात्वा विमुच्यते ॥

† नारायणी परोऽन्यताद अव्यक्ताद अव्यक्ताद उपरात्माः ।

अनुसासनरिमि लोकाः सप्तहीपाच मेदिणी

course its planetary Logos ; then we have the solar system with its solar Logos and beyond it we have *Narayana*—the Supreme Logos. This whole theory of Logoi-gradation well comes out in an old *Puranic* story which I shall now proceed to relate. Once upon a time the *Brahmā* of our system went to the abode of *Maha-Vishnu*. Now, *Brahmā* had a notion that he was the ~~only~~ creator in the universe and that except his *Brāhmaṇda* there was no other solar system. To remove this delusion, *Maha-Vishnu* by the power of His *Maya* created a *magic* picture. When *Brahmā* approached the entrance of *Baikuntha*, he was met by a strange door-keeper—a *Ganesha* with five trunks. *Brahmā* was rather upset by this. He thought to himself 'How is this ? This must be a strange being. My *Ganesha* has only one trunk, whereas this one has five !' However, composing himself he delivered his message to *Ganesha*, asking him to convey it to *Maha-Vishnu* as coming from *Brahmā*. *Ganesha* interrogated him thus : 'You are *Brahmā* ; to which *Brahmāṇda* do you belong ?' *Brahmā* was nonplussed. He said in surprise, 'what do you mean ? I am the *Brahmā*—the creater of the whole earth with its seven *lokas*.' *Ganesha* replied : 'I see, you belong to the earth-system ; come in.' *Brahmā* went in. A strange vision met his eyes. He saw a boundless lake—unfathomable, illimitable, immeasurable and in it a floating lotus million-petalled. In each petal was seated a beautiful virgin who was playing with a ball. *Brahmā* tried to count the number of petals in this strange lotus but his table of numeration

failed him. Brahmá gazed at the lotus with steadfast eyes and was not aware that time was running on. By and by, the globe with which one of the maidens was playing broke into fragments and the girl began to weep. Moved by her tears, Brahmá tried to comfort her, saying 'My child ! what does it matter that a globe has gone to pieces ? I am the Brahmá, I have created the *Brahmanda*, I can make as many balls as you wish me ; cease your weeping'. But the girl went on heedless of him, Brahmá was still more surprised and in order to put an end to the wailing he put forth his best efforts, to make such a globe ; but all his attempts went for nothing and thus foiled Brahmá stood utterly bewildered. The fivetrunked Ganesha was standing by, all this while watching Brahmá's ineffectual efforts. Seeing Brahmá's bewilderment he stepped forward and addressed him thus : 'Be not surprised, Oh Brahmá ! This lake is the infinite कारणनवा (Karanarnava) the ocean of immensity and this million-petalled lotus is the image of the universe. In each petal is a Brahmada and the girl seated therein is the presiding Deity of that Brahmada. The lotus is million-petalled, because there are innumerable such Brahmadas in the universe. The globe, which you have seen shivered to pieces, signifies the going into *pralaya* of that Brahmada. Until the period of dissolution is over, it will continue in *pralaya* and it is not for you or any one else to re-create it into manifestation. This lotus is rooted in Maha-Vishnu and is sprung from His navel. There is no limit set to His creation. The universe is immeasurable and Maha-Vishnu is the Lord of all'. Then

Brahma saw his error and was cured of his' delusion and he began to worship the Supreme Lord in lowness and humility.

Such is the God whom we are to seek and yet we must Para-Brahma not be oblivious of the phenomenal forms in which He works—the solar and the planetary Logoi, nor the subordinate beings—the various grades of Intelligences whom we have grouped together under the generic name of *Devas*. • And above, and behind all and as their immutable and ever abiding substratum is Para-Brahma,—that which is the nameless *Tao* of the Chinese ; the Adi Buddha of the Buddhists from whom अमिताभ (Amitava) the Supreme Deity arises ; the concealed Mystery of the Jewish Kabalah—the Ain-soph, the Ancient of the Ancients, the Unknown of the Unknown ; the Unconscious Father of the conscious fathers of the gods of the ancient Egyptians ; the boundless space of the Zoroastrians, from which arises the Supreme Logos the *Ahurmazd* ; the ineffable Thrice-unknown darkness in the Orphic system of the ancient Greeks ; the unfathomable Deity, incomprehensible, infinite and partless of the Catholic Church ;*—That which the Upanisads speak of as the निर्बिशेष, निरपात्ति, and निर्गुण, the अनिक्त and the अवाक्य, the Unknowable, the Unspeakable and the Indistinguishable, of Whom nothing can be said beyond this :—'Not this' 'Not this'—'नेति नेति' and of Whom silence is the most eloquent description.

